WINDOWS 95: Will Bill Gates' Pane Be Gamers' Gain?

June 1995 NO.131

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

The #1 Computer Game Magazine ZD

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Top Guns

A PC Pilot's Guide to Simulations

Infiltrate Dark Forces

Our Spies Expose the Empire's Secrets

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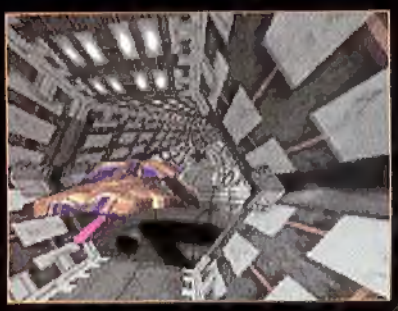

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–Computer Player, April `95

"It's a 3D vehicle shooter that's part **Star Wars** and part **Descent**."
–Computer Gaming World, March `95

"**Terminal Velocity** is a symphony of titillating action and g-force slurping excitement..."
–Strategy Plus, March `95

"The charm of the game is it's open-endedness, it's extensive multi-stage levels...[which] can be explored and destroyed at will."
–Computer Gaming World, May `95

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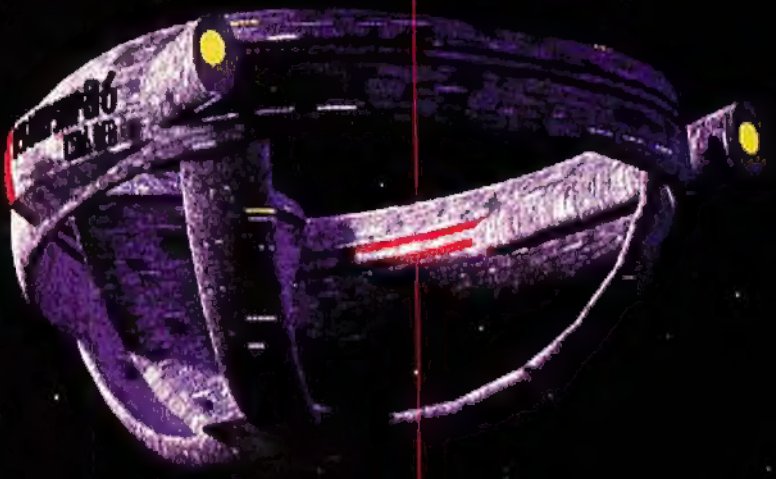

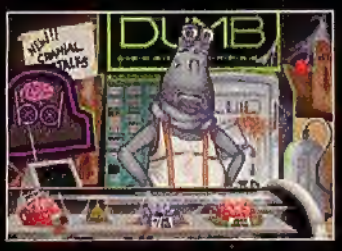

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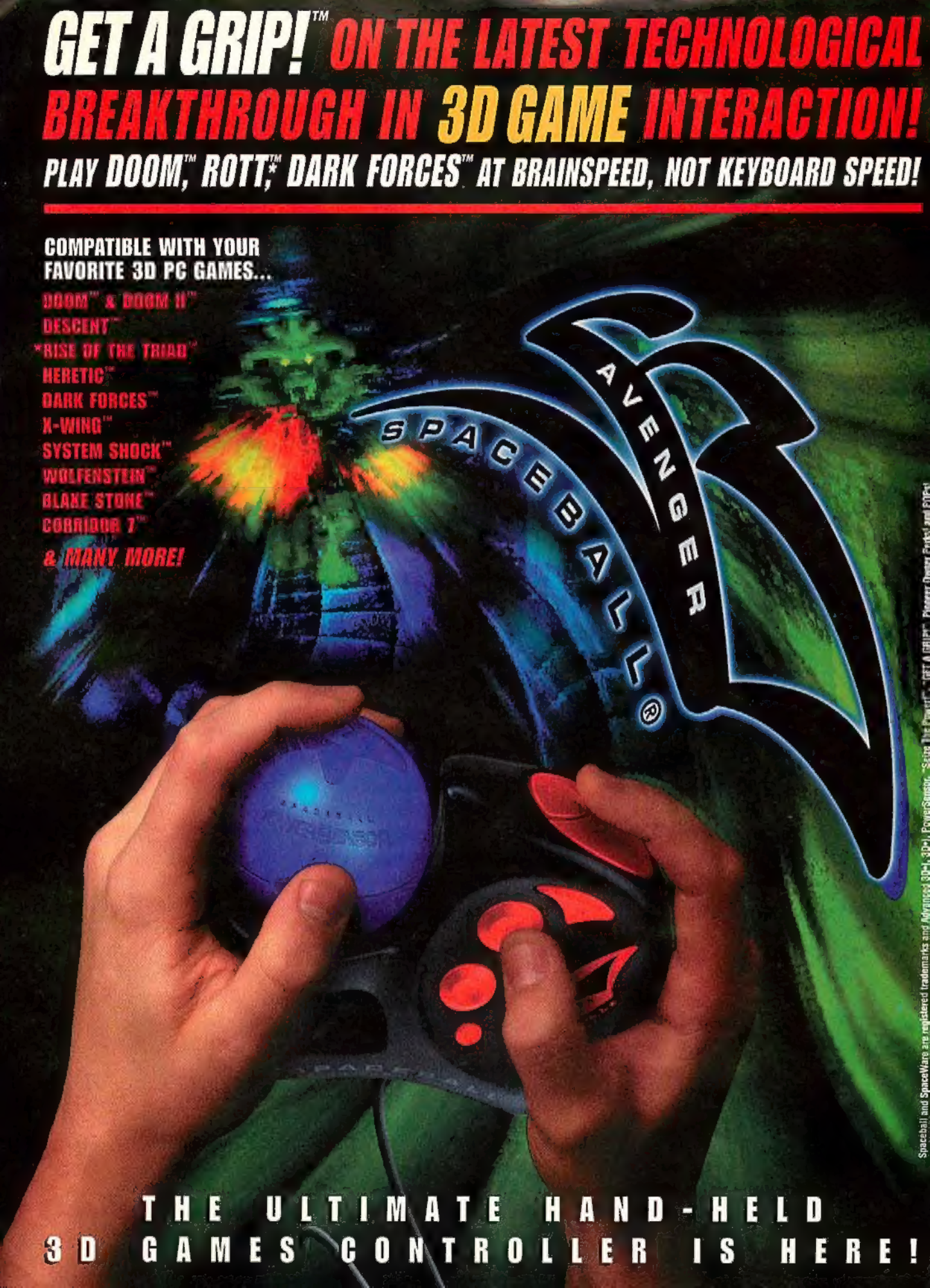
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Do Gamers Do Windows?
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COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

JUNE 1995

GET HIGH ON FLIGHT
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FEATURES

30 **SNEAK PREVIEW! MAGIC: THE GATHERING** You've bought the cards, built your deck, and traded rare spells with your friends. Now, you can battle on-line with a dude from Poughkeepsie. Find out how **MicroProse** plans to ensorcell the computer domain with **Wizard of the Coast**'s collectable card game phenomenon.

38 **FLIGHT SIMS ON HIGH** Earn your virtual wings with two real-life fighter pilots as your flight instructors. John and Bob Nolan stress Spad wings with Immelmans, blow out afterburners in F-14s, shoot down Zeros with ease, and let you know which fighter offers the most realistic—and the most entertaining—ride above the clouds.

58 **SPECIAL REPORT: WINDOWS '95** You've read about how well Win '95 will run word processors, spreadsheets and accelerated Windows applications. But what's *really* important is how the new OS will run games. Check out our technical expert's report and get the gamer's perspective.

ADVENTURE/ ROLE-PLAYING

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80 **SCORPIA'S MAIL** With *CGW*'s most intrepid adventurer as your guide, you can RETURN TO ZORK properly blessed, employ some ALIEN LOGIC and even shed a Tear of Seas in ULTIMA VIII: PAGAN.

82 **ALONE IN THE DARK 3** Ghostly or ghastly? Ghoulish or foolish? Jason Kapalka investigates **I-Motion**'s assumptions regarding Edward Carnby, ghosts, movie sets, and the Old West.

86 **BIOFORGE** Cybernetically-enhanced by the newest **Origin** technology, Charles Ardai's face-to-face encounter with the evil Dr. Mastaba finds him both compelled and repelled by this graphically intense world.

98 **DISCWORLD** Translating a fantasy world to the computer screen is always difficult. Charles Ardai thinks that **Pgynosis**' attempt to bring Terry Pratchett's humorous novels to the screen is a lot like having Eric Idle read a bunch of Pratchett novels to you—all at once.

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146 **D-DAY: OPERATION OVERLORD** Flying over pockmarked WWII battlefields, Jeff James experiences gorgeous graphics and physics-defying maneuvers in **Virgin**'s new flight sim.

STRATEGY/ WARGAMES

153 **BROADSIDES AND GRIPESHOT** Pushing his squads to their four-hex-per-turn limit, Alan Emrich wonders why tactical computer games can't simulate tactical fog of war as well as his favorite card game.

156 **GREAT NAVAL BATTLES III** Part simulation, part wargame—but whatever you call it, **SSI**'s third try is the charm...almost. Bob Proctor swabs the deck free of bugs, and finds a pretty powerful Pacific experience inside.

164 **STRATEGY! PANZER GENERAL** It may be WWII instead of WWI, but Field Marshal Tim Carter suggests you roll out those caissons if you want to see the spires of Moscow in '41.

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6:02 AM –

7:03 AM – HAD TEQUILA

9:31 AM – PUNCHED

12:02 PM –

6:31 PM – KICKED THE

MIDNIGHT – TOOK A RIDE AND

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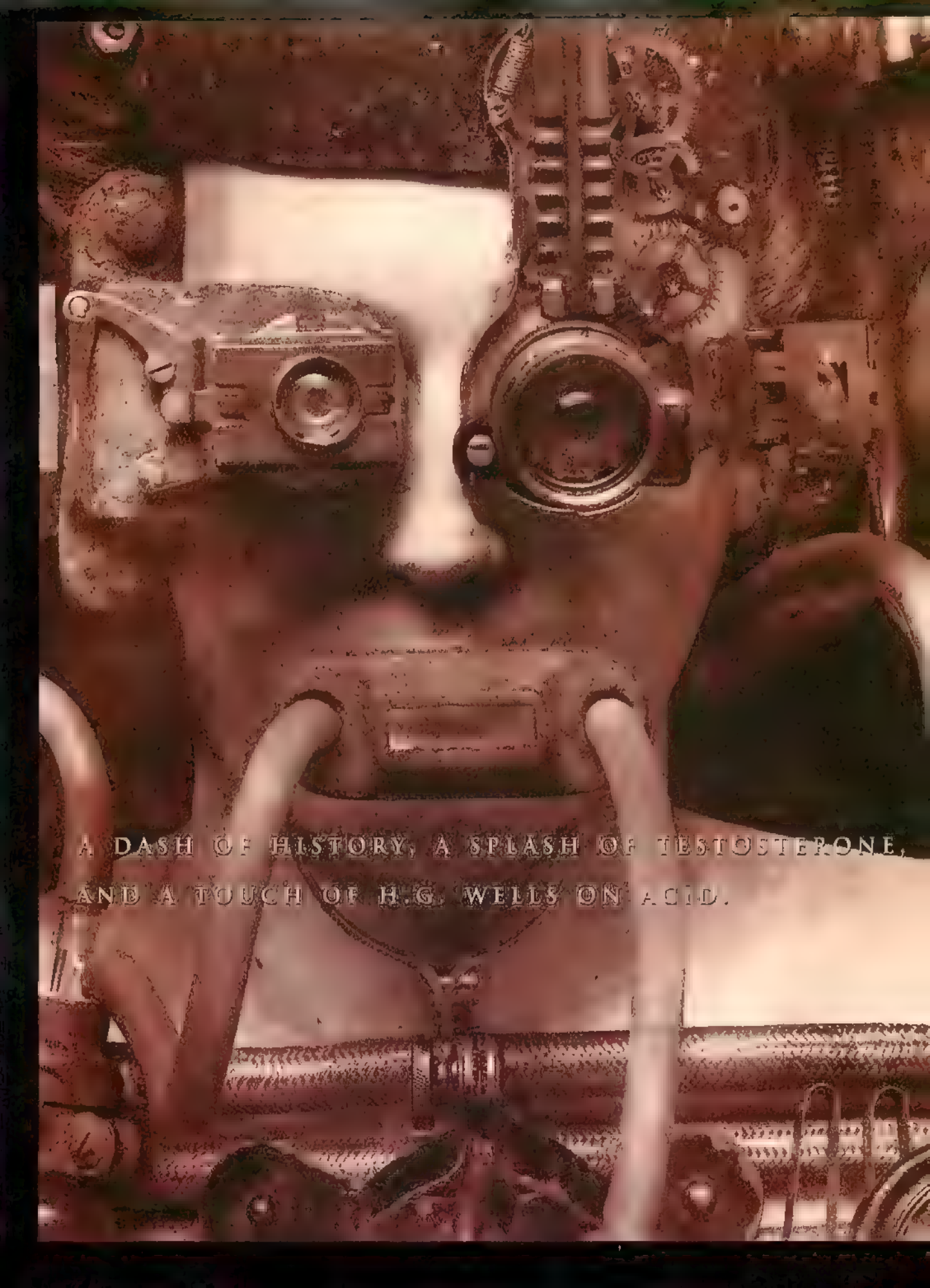
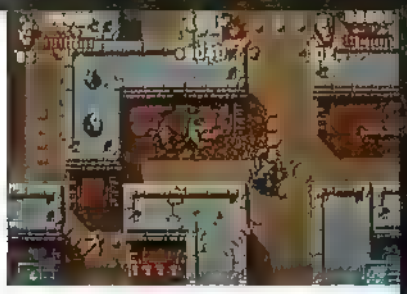

A DASH OF HISTORY, A SPLASH OF TESTOSTERONE,
AND A TOUCH OF H.G. WELLS ON ACID.



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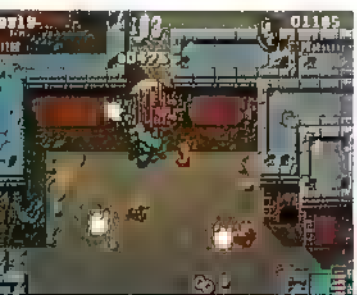

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What's An Honest Gamer To Do?

by Johnny L. Wilson

Several years ago, Goldie Hawn starred in a light comedy called *Protocol*. The high concept of the film was that a well-meaning but naive young woman accomplishes a lot of good for the State Department, but unwittingly gets caught up in an ethics scandal. The climax occurs when she is unwilling to take the cop-out position of pleading ignorance, but claims instead that she should have known better. She recites a line that, to my memory, went something like: "My father used to tell me that if a man tries to sell you a $500 watch for under $50, it's probably not even worth $10."

Though this may not be the exact quotation, it is definitely a useful sentiment. The proffered watch may be stolen, an inferior reproduction or even dysfunctional. Who knows? The net result is that the buyer gets cheated.

Computer gamers are currently being offered some of those $500 watches for $50. They are software packages which come in plastic bags or nondescript white boxes instead of typical retail packaging. Sometimes, they even come with stickers stating that they are not to be sold separately from computers, sound cards, joysticks or graphic accelerators. They are neither dysfunctional nor inferior reproductions. These economy editions of computer games were reproduced by hardware manufacturers so that they could be "bundled" with their hardware and used to show off the capability of that hardware.

I think an honest gamer should avoid buying debundled software, even if it comes from one of our advertisers.

A case could be made that they are stolen. Indeed, law enforcement authorities reportedly removed a wholesaler from the Intermedia show floor for selling such "unbundled" software. The right to reproduce said software was given to the hardware manufacturers solely to allow the inclusion of the software with the hardware package. Yet, some hardware manufacturers routinely overprint the allotted games and off-load the excess to the software liquidators.

Naturally, this hurts software companies, since they accept a low token payment (under $1.00 per unit "shipped) for bundling a limited number of games into these hardware/software bundles. Even this minor amount is paid on the basis of expected hardware shipments rather than actual CD pressings, so the white box and polybag versions of these products are zero-income units. Why do the software companies do this? They are betting that the "word of mouth" from customers who purchased hardware/software bundles containing their products will help increase retail sales.

If, however, there are zero revenue units available, many of these would-be purchasers may purchase the "unbundled" versions and, as a result, the software publisher does not even collect the modicum of income which would have been netted from units in the original bundling agreement. As a result, neither the publisher is rewarded for economic risk nor is the designer/design team rewarded for creative effort. The game buyer gets a great deal now, but sequels may not be made and similar games may not be published because of a perceived weakness in sales.

As a result, the unscrupulous liquidator of debundled software is the only one who really has anything to gain. A quick profit is garnered. A quick exit made. All is well. All except for the growth of the hobby

RECONNAISSANCE REPORT

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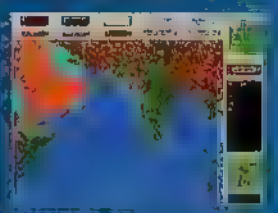

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through the most important critical approbation of all in a capitalistic society—the dollar rating. Debundling simply doesn't fuel further development.

On the business and productivity software side, the problem is mitigated by the fact that special ("crippled") versions of the programs are usually bundled with the hardware. If the consumer wants the "full" version of the program, they have to buy it from the publisher at a reduced, but still profitable price. In that sense, the bundling deal is something like shareware. It works for everyone.

On the game side, the hardware manufacturers do not want "crippled" versions. They want the entire game or nothing. So, publishers have to decide whether the large volume at limited income per unit is worth the cannibalization due to unbundled rip-offs or not. Some companies, like **Mindscape**, do not believe there is any cannibalization of retail sales and plan to continue making lots of bundling deals, in spite of unbundling. Others, like **Trilobyte** (kings of bundling during the launch of THE 7TH GUEST) are opting for retail distribution of limited editions of THE 11TH HOUR (with discount coupons for purchasing the full game inside the jewel case) because they believe there is cannibalization in bundling. Others, like **Interplay**, **Maxis** and **Spectrum HoloByte** are joining forces with SPA counsel Mark Traphagen to encourage federal intervention against "debundlers."

What's an honest gamer to do? I think an honest gamer should avoid buying debundled software, even if it comes from one of our advertisers. I've seen software piracy hurt publishers and computer platforms (Atari's ST is the most dramatic case). I believe debundling has the same potential.

HOW DO WE RATE?

The Guide To CGW's Review Rating System

★★★★★ Outstanding: That rare game that gets it all right. The graphics, sound, interface, and, of course, the game play come together to form a Transcendent Gaming Experience.

★★★★½ Very Good: A quality game that succeeds in many areas. May have minor problems, but is still worth your time and money, especially if you're interested in the subject matter/genre.

★★★½ Average: A mixed bag. Can often be a game that reaches for the stars, but falls short in significant areas. Can also just be a game that does what it does well, but lacks flair or originality.

★★½ Weak: A game with serious problems. May be buggy, may not have much play value, may be ill-conceived—and you may want to think twice about buying it.

★½ Abysmal: That rare game that gets it all wrong. Usually a buggy, incomplete, and/or valueless product.

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The #1 Computer Game Magazine

JUNE 1995, NUMBER 131

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Interface

LETTERS FROM CGW READERS

DEMONSTRATIVE CDS

In reading my April '95 issue of *Computer Gaming World*, I read in the Interface section of the "Rush Limbaugh Understands" quote in the game, MYST. I decided to look into some of the CD-ROMs that I own and found a few interesting extras. On my copy of VOYEUR, there are three demos included, but not listed, on the CD. CYBERIA, BLACKTHORNE and STARTREK are all on the VOYEUR CD. Also, on my copy of the KYRANDIA 3: MALCOLM'S REVENGE CD, there is a copy of the actual KYRANDIA 2: HAND OF FATE game. I was wondering if this is common and if there are even more little prizes that await us? Thanks to all of you at *CGW* for making a gaming magazine that is helpful, informative, fun and mature.

Brad Cretens
Cudahy, WI

It is extremely efficient to place demos for future and past products onto the same disc with a shipping CD-ROM product. You merely take up space which would otherwise go to waste and it doesn't cost any more to duplicate and distribute the demo(s) with the actual product than it would to ship the product alone. The reason the demos are often not listed is because it is usually very late in the debugging process before a company knows exactly how much CD space they have left. So, they swiftly shovel files onto the disk and hope that alert gamers will find them

LIMITED INTELLIGENCE

Thanks for the Victory in Europe articles in *CGW* #129, but it was a somewhat selective retrospective. Several products were not included which are relevant. **RAW Software** distributes Commander Alan Zimm's ACTION STATIONS, an excellent, if "graphically challenged" (CGA) simulator of surface naval warfare from 1922-1945. They also have games based on Velikiye Luki and the Battle of the Bulge.

The article didn't address a major number of air war simulators. The neglected range from potential "Hall of Famers" like **LucasArts**' SECRET WEAPONS OF THE LUFTWAFFE, **EA**'s CHUCK YEAGER'S AIR COMBAT, and **Dynamix**' ACES OVER EUROPE, to ACE OF ACES and HEROES OF THE 357TH. **Domark**'s FLIGHT SIM TOOLKIT has a WWII expansion as well as a Mac-only OUT OF THE SUN (with aircraft from the Eastern Front). **Kesmai**'s AIR WARRIOR system should also have been mentioned, as well as B-17 from **MicroProse**, **SSI**'s B-24, and **Virgin Interactive**'s D-DAY: OPERATION OVERLORD.

While the splendid PANZER STRIKE (**SSI**) was mentioned, I don't believe it was released for the IBM format. The companion product, TYPHOON OF STEEL, was. The original WARGAME CONSTRUCTION SET (**SSI**) and UMS from **MicroProse** also contained WWII scenarios. SSG also released more titles than the one given in the article.

A C-64 emulator for faster IBM machines is currently available as shareware. Please review it, if functional. If so, it would open up many other WWII titles for additional tours of duty. Also, please consider an update of the wargame/simulation compendium released in 1993.

Bruce Kohrn
Woodlawn, MD

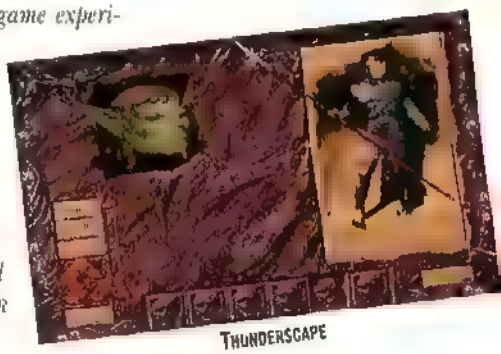
Thanks, Bruce. Your game listings add to the discussion. However, we decided early on in producing the Victory in Europe article that we would not try to emulate the exhaustive compendiums we had published in the past. Rather, we would focus on the better and most accessible wargames available for replaying the action in the European Theater. With only a couple of exceptions, because they offered something of a wargame experience, we tried to stay away from real-time simulations. The submarine sims have something of a slower pace than combat flight sims and THEIR FINEST HOUR allows you to simply participate as a gunner, if you desire.

*Outside of excluding ACTION STATIONS, the other omissions were the result of subjective editorial judgment. Omitting ACTION STATIONS was unfortunate, since it offers excellent gameplay. It is fairly complex, however, for novices and intermediate gamers. WARGAME CONSTRUCTION SET was fraught with more realism problems than its current incarnation, TANKS, and UNIVERSAL MILITARY SIMULATOR was extremely slow in playing time, limited in terrain types (no water anywhere in the universe), and better suited to earlier eras of combat than WWII. Most of the unmentioned **SSG** games were actually sequels in the BATTLEFRONT series.*

As for the C-64 emulator story, it is currently in the works and you should see it in just a couple of issues. We think that story will be a wonderful trip back in time for both us older gamers and those just entering the hobby.

SSILENCE ISN'T GOLDEN

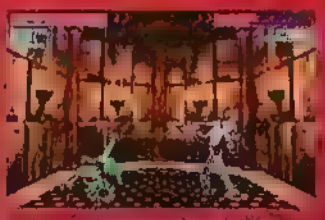
SSI has been known in the past for their solid foundation with regard to role-playing software. Although graphics were not great, content and



THUNDERSCAPE

"One Must Fall 2097 is the best fighting game available for the PC, bar none"

COMPUTER GAME REVIEW



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ease of playability did more than enough to compensate. I have noticed that they are veering off from role-playing and moving into other simulation-type games. With the exception of MENZOBERRANZAN, will SSI come back to the role-playing side or have they folded over to the competition?

Ryan Devin
Covina, CA

*The good news for role-players is that **SSI** is still working in that genre. Scorpia looks at RAVENLOFT 2: STONE PROPHET elsewhere in this issue and SSI has a new CRPG universe, THUNDERSCAPE (see picture on previous page), under development which features everything from magic to steampunk. Ironically, though, this is the same type of letter that addressed SSI when they moved into CRPGs after being primarily a wargame publisher. Wargamers wanted to know if they had folded over to the competition. Just as they have continued to publish Gary Grigsby's games and have just won Wargame of the Year with PANZER GENERAL, we believe they will continue to publish in the role-playing arena.*

FORT MISPRINT

We appreciate your editorial coverage of **Interactive Magic**'s premiere title, APACHE, in the March issue of your magazine. However, you inadvertently referred to the developers of APACHE as **Digital Illusions**, when the correct name of the developer is **Digital Integration** (creators of TORNADO).

Angela Edwards
The Bohle Company
(P.R. for Interactive Magic)
Los Angeles, CA

*Please forgive the conceptual dyslexia. Of course, Texas-based **Digital Illusions** was the developer of HARPOON. **Digital Integration** is a developer based in England. That will teach us to simply put "D.I." in our notes. Next time, we'll be claiming the game was being developed by **Drill Instructor** or something equally as absurd.*

GO AWAY GAME, YA' BUG ME

I have noticed in some of the game reviews that the game was cast in a negative light due to program bugs (i.e. MASTER OF MAGIC, MENZOBARRANZAN, etc.). I think it would be more effective to publish "Warning: Major Bugs In The Following Games..." and not review them until patches have been released. This might keep some companies beta-testing longer and prevent fiascoes like OUTPOST.

Ted Massow
Tulsa, OK

Yeah, and then we could publish all those blank pages every issue. First, we don't see many computer games that do not have some kinds of bugs, even when companies think they are clean. We have all had experiences with one game or another upon which the publisher has had no other reports of problems. So, there would be a problem of deciding when a game was "bug free" enough to dodge our warning. Would it just be crash bugs? Or would it be other bugs?

Second, we don't think computer gamers would be patient enough to wait for those "bug free" reviews. We already receive far too many letters from people who wish they had waited for the reviews. Which brings us to our next letter.

POLL POSITION

You may notice that most of the ratings I give on my *CGW* Poll card are fairly high. This is because I have learned to wait on buying games instead of buying them when they first hit the stores. I wait until they are reviewed and let your reviewers waste their time on the many bad games which glut the market. Thanks for saving me a lot of money over the years and guiding me to many great game-playing experiences.

Tom Quand
Phoenix, AZ

LICENSE-CIOUS BEHAVIOR

I think it's a shame that, due to stupid licensing arrangements, NASCAR RACING's forthcoming expansion packs cannot include the Daytona International Speedway. Papyrus and the owner of the Daytona rights, Sega, don't even compete in the same marketplace.

Brian Price
Tazewell, TN

True enough, Brian, but Sega originally obtained the electronic rights to the speedway for their coin-op game and they are busily converting a version for their Saturn machine. Since Sega is also moving into the personal computer market, we wouldn't be surprised to see their DAYTONA crop up in the same market as NASCAR RACING.

COPY COMMANDER

Don't get me wrong. I love the game, but is it just a coincidence that WING COMMANDER III and STAR WARS end the same way? In both the game and movie, the end occurs when Mark Hamill flies down a trench in a fighter with a bomb that he must fire at a target that will destroy the heart of the empire that he fights. Was this an accident or did it happen on purpose?

Also, I was heartbroken when Angel died. Is there any way to save her? I would be very happy if you would answer these questions in your next issue.

Brett Talley
Jasper, AL

Can you spell "homage?" Just as George Lucas was inspired by old WWII air combat movies when he directed some of the original Star Wars combat sequences, it had to have been too tempting for Chris Roberts not to have the actor who played Luke Skywalker perform in a scene which was more than merely reminiscent of the Star Wars ending. So, to gamers' delight, he gave in to temptation.

As for Angel, we could set up two 900 numbers with incredibly expensive surcharges. Then, those of you who want to bring her back a la the traditions of the early movie serials and the precedents established by comic books (can you spell "Robin?" "Superman?") could call 1 (900) SAV-ANGL and those who like the pathos of having Angel die could call 1 (900) KIL-ANGL. Then, we could pocket the money and sell an addendum to the WING COMMANDER IV script to Chris Roberts and Mark Day, based on whichever faction won the vote. But, that would be wrong. Maybe we could give you Chris' and Mark's home phone numbers and let you keep calling them in the dead of night until they agreed to resurrect her. Maybe not. They'd probably return the favor.

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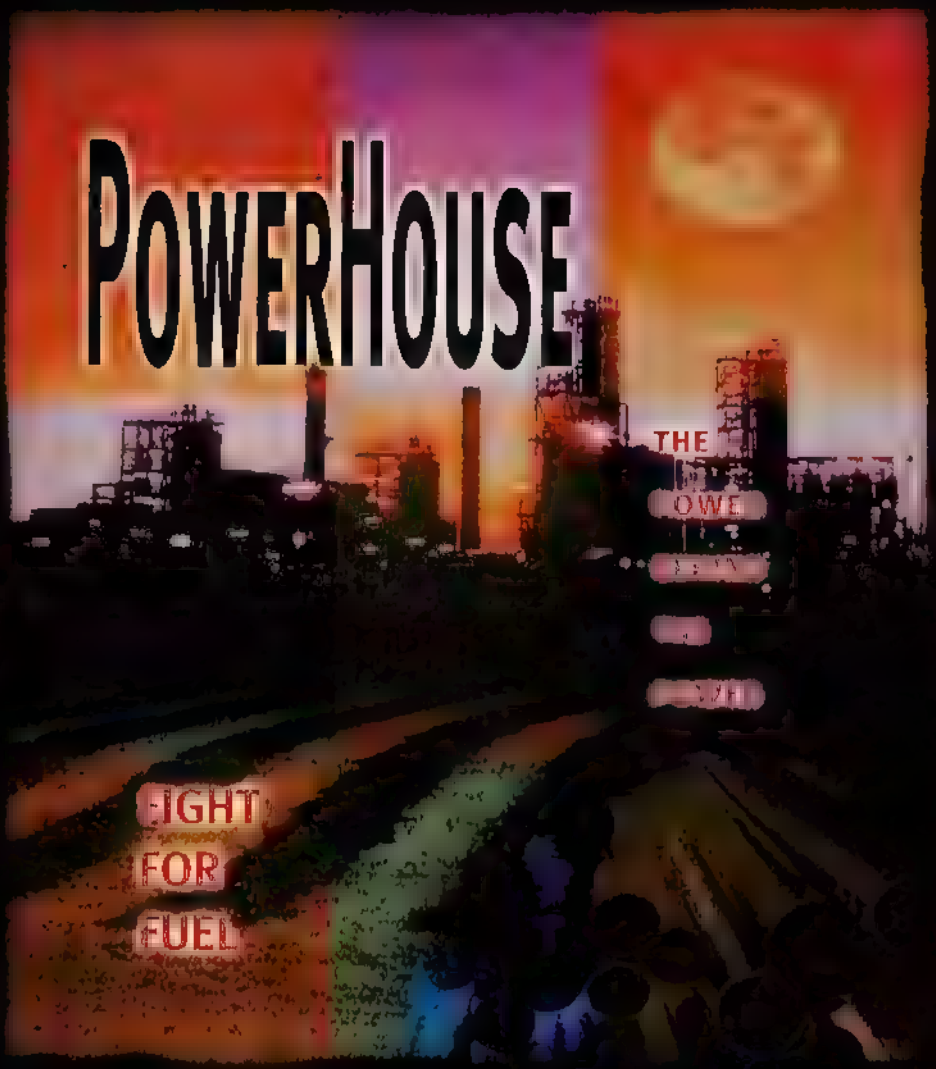

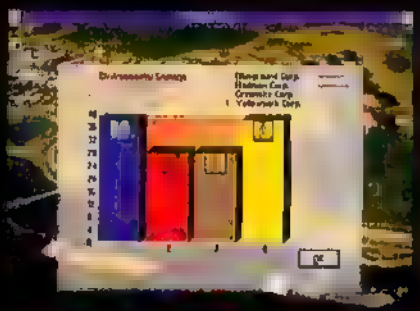

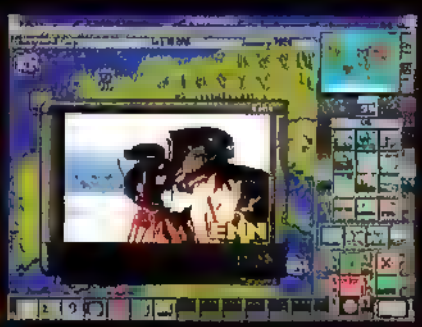

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Trilobyte's "Fossils" Fuel New Game Technology

11TH HOUR, CLAN DESTINY and DOG EAT DOG To Tantalize Gamers

Trilobyte is an ironic name for a technology-based company like the publisher of THE 7TH GUEST. Co-founders Rob Landeros and Graeme Devine have plenty of early computer game credits under their belts (SPIRIT OF EXCALIBUR, SPOT), as does Chief Operating Officer Kellyn Beeck (DEFENDER OF THE CROWN, ROCKET RANGER, CENTURION), but they're *not* fossils. Indeed, there is nothing fossilized about this company's approach to technology.

DOGGIE TREAT This *Ultimatte* video scene will be integrated into a 3-D Studio restaurant for DOG EAT DOG, a game of office politics.

With THE 7TH GUEST, Devine and Landeros wanted to push the edge by marrying digitized video and 3-D STUDIO. Devine's proprietary compression schemes guaranteed that they would get maximum playback potential on a minimum of CDs, and Landeros' artistic direction meant that the game would look unlike anything ever before. But they had an advantage. Since the video was used to depict ghostly images, they didn't have to deal with the harsh lines and aliased edges that usual result when video is placed atop 3-D rendered backgrounds.

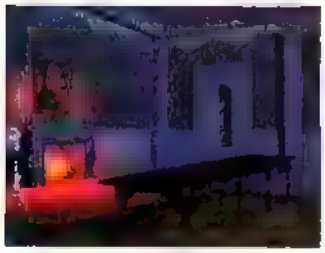
In THE 11TH HOUR, neither Devine, Landeros nor producer James Yokota could be satisfied with the same spectral on-screen images. They wanted to achieve a new level of suspended disbelief through the marriage of high quality video and 3-D backgrounds. So, they found an experienced television director in David Wheeler (26 episodes of *Hollywood Babylon*, filmed in three-camera techniques and based on a two-volume book series covering Hollywood scandals) and filmed the video both on location and in front of an Ultimatte green screen. Wheeler also added additional continuity to the vignettes penned by writer Matt Costello (credited with the loosely connected scenes of the original game). Then, Devine went to work with yet a newer version of his compression routines to ensure both faster playback (30 frames per second) and higher visual quality. The result (see this month's *Beta Bits*) is a more compelling use of video within the game.

CLAN DESTINY is scheduled for Fall release. Although it uses technology from THE 11TH HOUR, it incorporates cel-based animation into the existing game engine. Under John Gaffey's direction, Trilobyte artists have done character studies and elaborate storyboards in order for a traditional animation house to execute the actual anims. Then, the crew at Trilobyte uses **Cambridge Animation**'s ANIMO, a NEXT STEP animation program used by **Hanna-Barbara** and **Warner** as an ink and paint program, to manipulate the anims into the 3-D environments such that they take on a 2 and 1/2 dimensional quality. This is called 2 and a half dimensional "tweening" and Trilobyte is, thus far, one of the few companies trying to use it. The actual gameplay features the same kinds of puzzles as other

FOSSIL GHOULS Trilobyte's artists are still able to coax the finest performances out of 3-D Studio, as evidenced by this keel-hauling cadaver.

Trilobyte games, but the animation gives CLAN DESTINY a distinctly different feeling (Dare we say "*Scoobie Doo* Meets 7TH GUEST?") and a unique atmosphere.

DOG EAT DOG has a decidedly different feel. Trilobyte picked up the property, a unique office politics/soap opera/comedy game which



FAMILY PLOT When the Hanna-Barbara-esque characters of CLAN DESTINY inherit their ancestral castle, they'll visit some of these 3-D rendered rooms.

was in "turn-around" at **Disney**, in order to experiment with a new "Synthespian" technology. The game, originally scripted to have a '50's romance comic feel to it, was simply too dialogue intensive for the nascent technology, so Trilobyte elected to put it together with their existing tools. The branching and often controversial storyline will feature more than six hours of finished video compressed onto two CDs.

Although it will run on the 11TH HOUR technology, the entire game will be driven by conversation. As in **LucasArts'** SAM & MAX HIT THE ROAD, however, the comical dialogue is part of the fun, so a similar interface has been introduced. Where the LucasArts game used icons to depict general emotions/attitudes that had to be cycled through, DOG EAT DOG will offer buttons with clear labels which are scene specific. This campy game will appear in the first quarter of '96.

PLAYING LATELY?

Here are the games that your fellow players are blowing the most time with. Let us know which game you've been playing the most by writing the name of your current addiction in the "Playing Lately?" blank of the *CGW* Top 100 ballot (page 177).

Readers' TOP 10

Results for *CGW* #129, APRIL 1995

1. **Dark Forces** (LucasArts)
2. **Panzer General** (SSI)
3. **X-COM: UFO Defense** (MicroProse)
4. **Master of Magic** (MicroProse)
5. **Wing Commander 3** (Origin)
6. **Doom II** (id Software)
7. **Descent** (Interplay)
8. **Heretic** (Raven)
9. **Warcraft: Orcs and Humans** (Blizzard)
10. **Master of Orion** (MicroProse)

Notable Quotes

Wit, wisdom and caustic quips from gaming's harshest critics

"With version 1.31, MASTER OF MAGIC is finally the game it promised it would be...If it had decent diplomacy, it could easily be # 1."

T. Madden, St. Louis, MO

"DESCENT should've been called 'Dramamine.' What a cookie tosser!"

Brendan Reilly, Boston, MA

"Now That LucasArts has a first-person game in DARK FORCES, when will they have a role-playing game in the *Star Wars* universe?"

Dave B. Gainesville, FL

"I've always shunned strategy games, but went out on a limb to buy PANZER GENERAL. I found it to be enjoyable and highly addictive—even for a non-wargamer like myself. I'm worried though: does this mean I have to tape my glass frames and wear a pocket protector?"

Jon McVety, Fort Myers, FL

"I loved DARK FORCES, but I wish LucasArts would find out that there's a lot more space on a CD. Only 14 levels?"

Jason Daily, Miamisburg, OH

Digging For Gold In Shovelware

New Game Packs Lower The Cost Of Adding Good Games To Your Library

Game publishers eager to mine residual profits from previously released titles have found gold in shovelware packs, and in many cases gamers can find a few nuggets there, too. Companies such as **Sierra, Accolade, SSI** and **Interplay** have compiled some good games into collection packs, and in many cases they live up to such claims as "4 Classics For The Price Of 1."

One of the early trend-setters in this category is an unassuming stack of CDs called the 5th. 10 Pak. With little fanfare and no coverage from the game press, this collection of 10 mediocre titles managed to rank fourth among gaming titles sold last year at 18 retail chains, according to statistics from PC Data. The Pak, from Sirius Publishing (602-951-3288), includes WHOSHOT JOHNNY ROCK, HELL CAB, CORRIDOR 7, the 1994 SPORTS ILLUSTRATED ALMANAC and various multimedia titles.

More seasoned game players may find Interplay's (714-553-6655) BATTLE CHESS COLLECTION to be the right move. It includes the original version of BATTLE CHESS (*CGW* Hall of Famer), BATTLE CHESS 4000, BC II CHINESE CHESS, and a significantly enhanced version of the original game.

Velocity (800-VLOCITY) has finally emerged from the spectre of abstract action games with a collection of "flight" games called the MILE HIGH CLUB. You'll have to take the good with the bad here, and there is enough of both: WING COMMANDER ACADEMY, MIG-29, JETFIGHTER II and MEGAFORTRESS fly higher than F-14 TOMCAT, ATAC, HEROES OF THE 357TH and the now dated WING COMMANDER. But for $29.95, you get plenty of bang for the buck.

PC pilots will find a richer mix of flight sim games in the ACES COLLECTOR'S EDITION from Sierra (800-757-7707). This four-pack includes some all-star titles: ACES OVER EUROPE, ACES OF THE PACIFIC, RED BARON and A-10 TANK KILLER. The COLLECTOR'S EDITION also includes Aviation Pioneers, a multimedia review of early aviation history.

Accolade (800-245-7744) has two collection packs on deck for baseball and golf fans. A Hardball III compilation includes MLBPA Players and stadium add-on disks, and the JACK NICKLAUS TOUR COLLECTION includes JACK NICKLAUS GOLF, extra courses and various design add-ons.

SSI's (800-234-3088) CRITIC'S CHOICE STRATEGY COLLECTION brings together five solid strategy games. Not everyone may enjoy ULTIMATE DOMAIN and THE CHESSMASTER 3000, but ARCHON ULTRA, SERF CITY and DARK LEGIONS are three respected titles with countless hours of game time waiting to be unlocked.

And if you're still not convinced that quality CD collections are on the upswing, the JAM PAK from **Carbela Tek** (415-873-6484) serves up INDYCAR RACING (*CGW*'s Premier Sim of '93), FLEET DEFENDER, SYSTEM SHOCK (Premier nominee), and PANZER GENERAL, Premier Wargame of 1994. A marvelous collection, the JAM PAK is proof that there is gold waiting to be found in the rubble of shovelware—for those willing to dig for it.

AFFAIRS IN THE CYBERBURBS

Three Major On-Line Services Announce World Wide Web Access

CompuServe, Prodigy and AOL have all announced Internet access to the World Wide Web. In addition, the three major services will make free web browsers available to users—the equivalent of giving cars to customers who must then purchase fuel (on-line time) to go places.

Prodigy uses a very user-friendly Mosaic-like browser, while CompuServe uses the tried-and-true SPRY version of Mosaic. CompuServe also offers three free hours of Internet access per month, with additional time at $2.50 an hour. AOL's Web connection had not been released as of press time.

When you go surfing, be sure to drop down the face of *CGW*'s home page at "http://www.gamingworld.ziff.com/". It'll give you a warm feeling in your netsuit.

"*Triad* is a truly awesome game!" But don't take our word for it.

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— *Interactive Entertainment*

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— *Computer Game Review*

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APOGEE

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Created by Apogee Software, Inc. and distributed by Formgen Inc. 76-[illegible] Grey Rd. Scottsdale, AZ 85260, (800) 288-2890.
Available on disk and CD. Supports serial, modem, and [illegible] (individual or team) only.
Body bags not included.

BETA bits

THE 11TH HOUR

A television producer mysteriously disappears while she is seeking out the true story behind THE 7TH GUEST's Stauf Mansion. As her anchorman, you think it might be a good career move to rescue her. Doing so, however, means spook city for you again, as you run smack into a Twin Peaks-style plotline where you'll have to solve puzzles old, new, borrowed and blue.

11TH HOUR, **Trilobyte's** sequel to THE 7TH GUEST, is nearing completion and looks even more impressive than its predecessor in a number of ways. First of all, it is more user-friendly than the original. You no longer have to traipse back to the library every time you want to use the game book to get hints or to save and retrieve games. Instead, this time you actually carry around your interface, a PDA that handles all of those functions anywhere in the game.

Second, rather than limiting the video to ghostly images played out against 3-D STUDIO backgrounds, the new game features letterboxed 640x320 digitized video playing at 30 frames per second. These video sequences feature some of the special effects used to portray the ghosts in the original, and also—thankfully—feature cinematic-like story exposition that hangs together much better than the disjointed vignettes of the previous game.

GHOSTESS WITH THE MOSTEST As the TV anchorman protagonist of THE 11TH HOUR you'll run into all sorts of people, from this desirous hussy of a haunt to gourmet ghouls who'd like to have you for dinner.

The trademark logic puzzles are still present, forming the heart of most of the interactivity, but there is also a new feature called the "Treasure Hunt." Solving a puzzle prompts film clip clues to play on your "organizer" and simultaneously opens up new rooms for you to explore. Then, your pocket computer gives you a riddle to solve. Instead of typing the answer, though, you have to navigate through the "open" rooms and pick out the object that answers the riddle. These answers are usually anagrams and, in typical Trilobyte fashion, are often quite intricate.

BOY MEETS GIRL Among the various characters you'll fight with in WARRIORS is a New York street thug who has power from both sides of the plate.

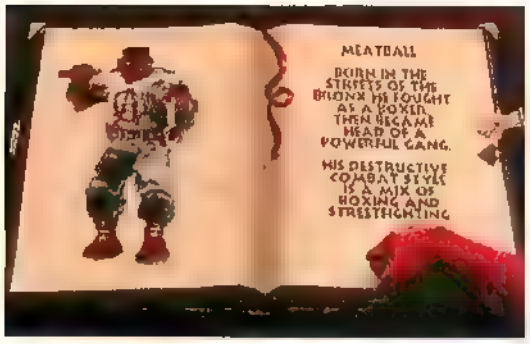
Another improvement is an expanded "insult" database. So far, there are over 100 different insults, meaning that players won't get bogged down with too many "Feeling Lonely?" phrases, which was so exasperating last time around. And, since the main character is a journalist, there are plenty of digs at the most despised profession this side of law.

WARRIORS

When it comes to STREET-FIGHTER-style games, our attitude has rapidly become like those Mountain Dew guys: "seen it, done it, nailed it shut." But we were surprised when we saw the path **Mindscape** is blazing with their upcoming action game WARRIORS. We've seen bitmapped, raytraced and rotoscoped graphics, and this game looks like none of the above. **Atreid Concept**, the developer, is incorporating some rather unique features, including an entirely new graphical style, in an effort to distance themselves from the competition.

For starters, WARRIORS uses 3D BIO MOTION, a brand new animating system that allows "an almost infinite number of hyper-realistic animations." Basically, the computer manages a character's 3D model, calculating and drawing out all of his, her, or its movements in real time, while saving valuable processing time. The system, in addition to rendering more realistic-looking fighters, also allows characters to interact with the environment. Gamers will be able to climb poles and pick up weapons. Additionally, the typical flat two dimensional view will be supplemented by a slightly elevated 3D angle and a fully rotating replay mode.

Unique graphics aside, WARRIORS will still have much in common with its counterparts. Two characters will still square off in a best-of series where the loser is the first to see his or her health drop to zero, and the winner moves on. Each of the 10 different fighters, ranging from a Masai warrior to a New York street punk, will have their own fighting styles, their own special moves, and their own "secret" attacks. One major departure is that some of the fighters will have weapons (the



New York thug carries a Louisville Slugger—maybe the Mets should sign him up).

We were initially concerned with the game's seemingly sluggish controls, but Mindscape reassured us that this was intentionally done in order to reflect greater realism. Fighters will actually take some time to execute the moves you key in, as opposed to just instantly reacting. This might frustrate some action gamers; a "realism" toggle might be the answer here.

If you're an action gamer, particularly of the STREET FIGHTER variety, keep your eyes open for WARRIORS this summer. Mindscape and Atreid are dreaming big here, and they just might extend the reach of the genre.

SPACE QUEST VI

It was as a janitor that Roger Wilco began his career as a space-hero, and it is his janitorial duties to which he must return again in SPACE QUEST VI from **Sierra Online**. The latest installment of this popular science fiction series spoof lands Roger on the most grueling R&R planet in the galaxy, on which life-threatening arcades and alien-infested streets are the norm. At the onset of the game Roger's ship is taken over by the toaster-headed "Bjorn," who are hell-bent on assimilating the entire species into GE appliances; they're also aiming to turn the ship's crew into scoops of sherbet. The *real* threat however, this time, is a hidden figure who will ultimately send Roger on a "Fantastic Voyage" that will force our hero to consider life from a completely different perspective.

The series' sly rib-tickling humor is in place, and the game seems to have kept the farcical abundance of Star Trek that formed the backbone of SPACE QUEST V. One novel feature is COMPOST, a terminal access system which is accessible throughout various areas of Roger's ship. Using COMPOST, Roger can hack into all manner of databases, ranging from vital ship functions to alien races. Additionally, our hero will be able to use certain Cyberfunctions to exploit various forms of communication, tool around the ship using the intraship transport, and get into more trouble than a Klingon in Federation space. A Windows program, SPACE QUEST VI's SVGA graphics are as sharp and clear as those featured in other recent Sierra games like KING'S QUEST VII. Welcome back Roger—we missed ya, you little space fart!

LEGGO MY EGGO Help Roger Wilco defeat the toaster-headed Bjorn in SPACE QUEST VI and overcome vile enemies like Dirty Laundry and The Messy Room.

PIPELINE

ESTIMATED RELEASE DATES BASED ON THE LATEST INFORMATION FROM GAME DEVELOPERS

NAME OF GAME, COMPANY	RELEASE DATE
11TH HOUR Virgin	7/95
ABSOLUTE ZERO Domark	6/95
ADV. CIVILIZATION Avalon Hill	7/95
AWFUL GREEN THINGS QQP	7/95
BATTLES IN TIME QQP	7/95
BEYOND SQUAD LEADER AH	9/95
CAESAR II Impressions	9/95
CARD PLAYER'S PARADISE QQP	6/95
CHAOS CONTROL I-Motion	6/95
CHESSMASTER 5000 Mindscape	9/95
CONQUEROR Time-Warner	7/95
CYBERMAGE Origin	9/95
DAGGERFALL Bethesda	6/95
DUKE NUKE 'EM 3-D Apogee	6/95
EMPIRE II New World	9/95
EXPLORATION Interactive Magic	6/95
FAST ATTACK BOATS Time-Warner	8/95
FRANKENSTEIN Interplay	6/95
G-NOME Merit	6/95
HARVESTER Merit	6/96
HEROES MIGHT & MAGIC New World	8/95
JETFIGHTER III Mission Studios	6/95
LAST BLITZKRIEG SSG	7/95
LAST BOUNTY HUNTER American Laser	6/95
LORDS OF MIDNIGHT Domark	6/95
MAGIC, THE GATHERING MicroProse	6/95
MARCO POLO I-Motion	7/95
MECHWARRIOR II Activision	7/95
MILLENNIA GameTek	9/95
METAL LORDS New World	9/95
MISSION CRITICAL Legend	9/95
NAVY STRIKE MicroProse	6/95
NETWORK CIVILIZATION MicroProse	6/95
NEW HORIZONS Koe	6/95
PHANTASMAGORIA Sierra	6/95
SILENT HUNTER SSI	9/95
SPACE QUEST VI CD Sierra	6/95
STEEL PANTHERS SSI	8/95
TEKWAR Capstone	9/95
THE BIG LucasArts	9/95
THIRD REICH Avalon Hill	6/95
THUNDERSCAPE SSI	7/95
TOP GUN Spectrum HoloByte	7/95
WARRIORS Mindscape	7/95

Attack of the Spaceballs

Spaceball Game Controller Keeps Your Hands On The Action

The SPACEBALL AVENGER is an innovative approach to controlling the increasingly complex new breed of 3D action games, such as DESCENT **(Interplay)** and DARK FORCES **(LucasArts)**. It's a lightweight hand-held device with a pressure-sensitive, motion-controlling ball for your left hand, and a molded grip with buttons for your right hand. The SPACEBALL AVENGER allows six degrees of freedom (every way you can move in DESCENT) and plugs into an available serial port. A small 12K TSR program and custom executables are provided during the customizable installation routine, which includes an action training game to get you into practice. It takes a while to get used to the sensitivity of the SPACEBALL AVENGER, but it does allow you to perform fast maneuvers that are all but impossible using a keyboard, mouse or joystick.

We're so accustomed to using a joystick or a mouse in our right hands that we found it somewhat difficult getting used to controlling movement with the ball of the SPACEBALL AVENGER in our left hand. The buttons are useful, but are laid out in a way that some may find awkward.

While the installation queries you for existing action games and does a nice job at setting up a menu, its lack of bundled games and steep price will probably keep it out of most gamers' hands.

Price: $179.95. For more information, call Spacetek IMC at (508) 970-0300.

Or dial up their WWWeb site: http://www.spacetec.com.

The 64 Gigabyte QUESTION?

In our continuing quest for the answer to the 64 Gigabyte Question, we asked Jonathan Blackley of ***Looking Glass Technologies*** *what kind of wild game he'd design given unlimited processing power and a DOD budget. The physics and programming brain behind such games as* SYSTEM SHOCK *and the upcoming* FLIGHT UNLIMITED *and* TERRA NOVA *surprised us with the following:*

The worst thing was those damn fighters—FW-190s, circling over us like goddamn metal vultures, waiting for the flak to end. We dumped our bombs, loosened up the formation, and bingo! there they were, diving with something like 400 knots, impossible for the gunners to hit. They circle, make a pass and BAM there goes another '29, spinning awkwardly away, its crew probably pinned to their airplane by the forces of rotation, thinking of their wives and families on the whole slow trip down. And up go the Germans again, ready for another go. I'm beat, my gunners are beat, my airplane has holes, and all I see is Focke-Wulfs. Here they come for another go, about 10 o'clock, 45 degree dive, wow they're fast.

Wait—something was wrong that lead Kraut was trying to turn, when ZOOM! up from under our belly come five shiny silver P-51s! Suddenly the fight drops back behind our formation, and the last thing I see is one of those ugly brown 190s on its way back to the Fatherland—the hard way.

I want to know what it felt like to drive one of those P-51s. I want to save the boys in the bombers. I want to sweat like hell, I want to get worried, and I want to cry when I fail. I want to have the piss scared out of me by a flight simulator. I want to be mad at the FW190s. I want it to be better than a great movie, because I was THERE.

You want to know what kind of game I'd do if I had unlimited computing power, and I'm going to disappoint you, because I think you're asking the wrong question. I don't want unlimited technology. I don't want 10 million textured lit bump maps per second, I don't want real-time fluid dynamics or 32 bit color. I don't want 100-bit 10Mhz surround sound audio. And I don't want 100X CD-ROM (wow, actually...).

I want to know what the secret of this whole immersive reality experience is. When I watch Quentin Tarentino movies, when I listen to Coltrane, when I read Dostoyevsky, I come away with SOMETHING. Something I didn't have before. They change me; they change the way that I look at the world. We can't do this in our medium yet, and until we can, I'll never be satisfied. I want our games to be alive, to move us, to kick our butts.

GO HEAD TO HEAD WITH AN AIR WARRIOR.

FOR REAL.

LT. COLONEL ROBERT "MOUSE" SHAW
VETERAN F-16 FALCON PILOT AND GENIE® USER

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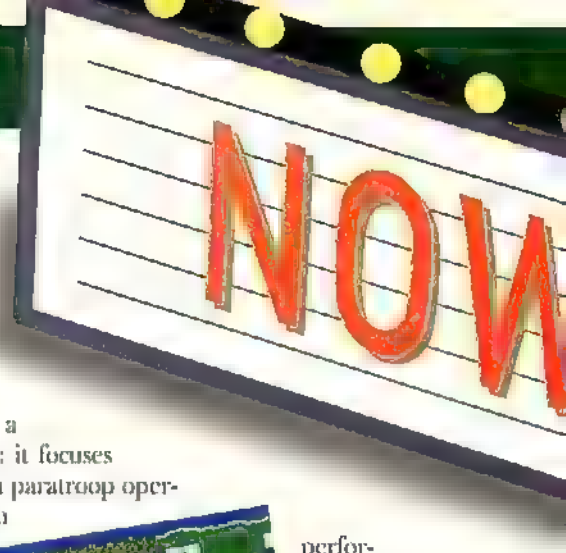
OUR GAMES BLOW EVERYBODY ELSE'S AWAY!

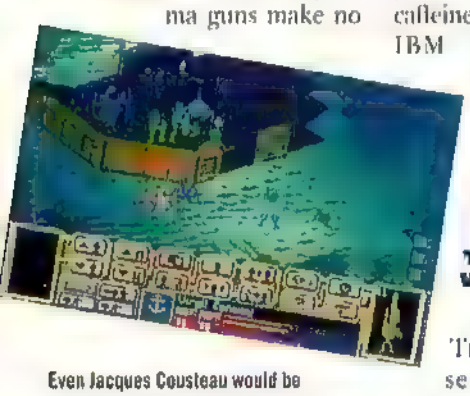
Circle Reader Service #30



X-COM: TERROR FROM THE DEEP

A bustling coastal town becomes strangely silent...a merchant ship sends out a frantic "mayday" signal...fearless sailors and dockworkers scatter like rats under an attack by scaly, fetid, greenish creatures. Yes, once again X-commanders are called to duty to rid the planet of slimy aliens with plasma pop guns and sinister plans. But this time, those fiends from **MicroProse** have clawed through the seas and dragged the intrepid adventurers of the original X-COM beneath the waves, where plasma guns make no sound. So, in a scene out of *Flipper Was A Sectoid*, you get to master the intricacies of aiming spearguns, firing portable torpedoes and throwing grenades underwater (don't think about it too much). The CD version has some added bells and whistles, but fans of the original game—*CGW*'s Premier Game of the Year—will be happy to learn that the basic engine remains the same. If anything, these aquatic baddies are tougher to subdue than their extra-terrestrial kin, which is good news for gamers...and caffeine purveyers everywhere. IBM floppy, CD-ROM, $59.95. Circle Reader Service #1.

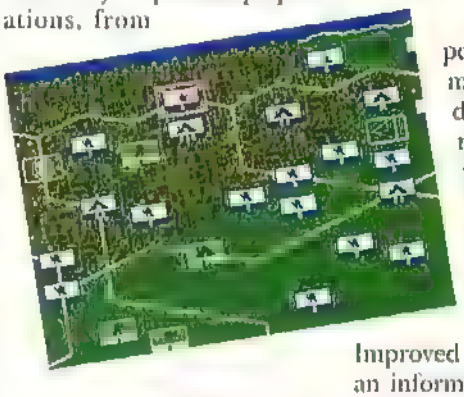
MICROPROSE SOFTWARE, HUNT VALLEY, MD, (410) 771-0440



Even Jacques Cousteau would be amazed at the bizarre aquatic life forms you encounter in X-COM: TERROR OF THE DEEP.

THE PURE WARGAME

After abstract hits like THE GRANDEST FLEET, it seems odd that **QQP** would release a historical wargame. Still, THE PURE WARGAME tries to live up to its title, offering a unique angle: it focuses exclusively on paratroop operations, from the scattered landings at Crete to the ill-fated bridges of Arnhem. As with PANZER GENERAL (**SSI**), units may attack and then move or vice-versa, which leads to a very fluid and often confused tactical situation—appropriate for WWII paradrops. Even though units move and fight on their own, there is a "group attack" option which rewards well-planned attacks. Unit performance is largely dependent on current fatigue and morale levels, and the whole combat system has that cozy PERFECT GENERAL kind of feel, but with better AI. Improved QQP graphics and an information-rich interface make this an accessible game for both the novice and serious wargamer. IBM floppy, CD-ROM, $59.95. Circle Reader Service #2.



The *Fallschirmjager* are at their peak in *Heraklion*, one of eight scenarios showcasing paradrops in THE PURE WARGAME.

QQP INC., FLEMINGTON, NJ, (908) 788-2799

LOST EDEN

Jurassic Park Interactive? Not quite. **Virgin Interactive**'s latest graphical adventure, which reminded us slightly of Harry Harrison's *Eden* novels, has lots of flashy graphics and an interesting plot. Although the storyline's foundation is

SHANGHAI: GREAT MOMENTS

Shanghai is one of those "easy to learn, hard to win" kind of games that quickly captures your mind and reluctantly lets it go. This is especially true given **Activision**'s extravagant multimedia release of SHANGHAI: GREAT MOMENTS. The basic premise of this classic tile game, which involves trying to match and remove tiles *a la* solitaire, has been enhanced with several traditional variations and lots of neat visuals. Live-action video introductions and strategy hints by Rosalind Chao (*Joy Luck Club*) are scattered throughout, and there are several different tile sets, all of which are pleasantly animated. Upon winning a game, gamers are treated to one of over 150 different video clips. This game is surprisingly addicting—we found that "one quick game" quickly turned into several. One drawback is the repetitively annoying soundtrack, which is decidedly sub-par for a game of this quality. But overall, SHANGHAI: GREAT MOMENTS looks good, and with its gameplay enhancements, appears to have some durability. IBM floppy, CD-ROM, $49.95. Circle Reader Service #5.

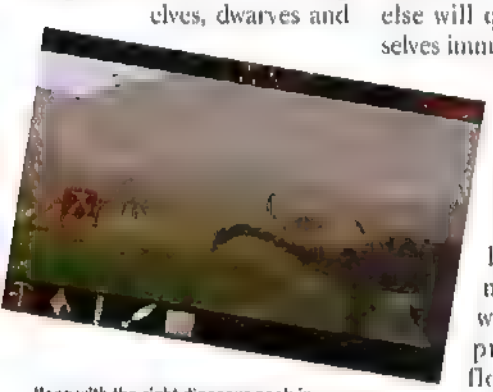
Novices and veterans beware—it's easy to get *Shanghaied* by SHANGHAI: GREAT MOMENTS.

ACTIVISION, LOS ANGELES, CA, (800) 477-3650

PLAYING

your basic "save humanity from the evil foozle king," its implementation is refreshingly original. Instead of recruiting elves, dwarves and trolls to assist you, *brontosaurs*, *velociraptors* (who we now think got a bad rap) and Amazon women become your allies. And the Tyran, a ferocious clan of T-Rexes (who else?), led by the wretched Moorkus Rex are your enemy. Although the hard-core adventurer might be turned off by LOST EDEN's lack of complexity—this is basically a slightly less linear DEATHGATE—most everyone else will quickly find themselves immersed in this adventure game's rich environment. Combine this with an absolutely breathtaking soundtrack and it looks like Virgin might just have a winner of jurrasic proportions. IBM floppy, CD-ROM, $69.95. Circle Reader Service #3.

VIRGIN INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT, IRVINE, CA, (800) 874-4607



Hang with the right dinosaur pack in LOST EDEN and you'll save the world from the teeth of disaster, and the Tyranosaurus Rex.

PIZZA TYCOON

Mama Mia, pizzeria! We never thought of making pizza as an incredibly involving profession until we received **Microprose**'s latest "Tycoon" game, PIZZA TYCOON. Budding doughboys can make their pepperoni dreams a reality with all the toppings by successfully managing a single pizza joint into a premier European franchise (sound familiar, Domino's fans?). Along the way, you'll buy, rent and sell property, design your own pizzas, hire and fire employees, and even go into cahoots with the Mob. This business sim is incredibly detailed and fairly involving, yet it still manages to maintain a certain element of fun, mostly because of the cartoon quality animations and humorous events sprinkled throughout. Although we found making individual pizzas (which involves dragging and dropping tomatoes, cheese and other toppings onto a crust) fun initially, we're not sure everyone will, particularly after their 96th pizza. And there is no "auto-pizza-create" mode. Gamers looking for light fare may knead to look elsewhere—PIZZA TYCOON is actually a fairly detailed, sophisticated game. Gamers with a taste for some comically infused number crunching and decision making should consider this one. IBM floppy, CD-ROM, $59.95. Circle Reader Service #4.

MICROPROSE SOFTWARE, HUNT VALLEY, MD, (410) 771-0440

Protect your dough in PIZZA TYCOON by outbaking the competition, and if that doesn't work, you can simply blow up their shops.

VIRTUOSO

Mediocre graphics and mediocre gameplay make VIRTUOSO, by **Vic Tokai,** well, mediocre at best. The year is 2055 and as a rock superstar, you have decided to escape into the first-person action-filled world of Virtuoso. Unfortunately, sluggish controls and repetitive action are the norm in the future, at least when it comes to playing games. Most of the enemies look like flat, stiff cardboard cutouts (although the evil snowmen are clever), and they move like it, too. Gameplay consists of the usual: find the key in order to escape, and along the way decimate the evil masses and discover lots of neat power-ups. On a positive note, the presence of three completely different environments (Mars, Underwater Biosphere, and Haunted House), is a good idea, and the music is not bad. Who will VIRTUOSO appeal to? In all honesty, we're not sure. Perhaps the absolutely DOOM-starved might want to check it out, but this is one game that is probably better suited for the shareware market than commercial release. IBM floppy, CD-ROM, $44.95. Circle Reader Service #6.

VIC TOKAI INC., TORRANCE, CA (310) 326-8880

Frosty isn't such a very, very happy soul in Vic Tokai's VIRTUOSO.

That Old Deck Magic

MicroProse Offers New Deal To MAGIC: THE GATHERING Lovers

by Johnny L. Wilson

Its images are drawn from ancient archetypes, presented as some of the best fantasy illustrations available today. Its intoxicating interest level is maintained by intricate play balance, bearing near infinite permutations. Its invigorating challenge is undergirded by subtle, simple game mechanics mixed with a depth and diversity, guaranteed by its capacity for customization. It is the card game, MAGIC: THE GATHERING. It is a social phenomenon closest in kin to the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS explosion of the mid to late '70s, a game and social encounter held under one rules rubric.

For those unfamiliar with MAGIC: THE GATHERING, the concept is simple. You are a wizard dueling another wizard. Wizards, of course, are hard to defeat, so you must reduce your opponent's point total from her initial 20 life points down to zero. Instead of using some dusty grimoire to cast your spells, you use a deck of cards—your custom deck of 55 cards which you have assembled through trading, gambling a la "keepsie" marbles, and purchasing via "Booster Packs." Some cards represent lands (power sources) and other cards represent spells, enchantments, interrupts and instantaneous magicks. All of the cards are color-coded to reflect their sources of power (white, red, green, black and blue mana—roughly equivalent to the Death, Life, Nature, etc.), and there is a definite routine to play.

MACABRE MORTAR & PESTEL Wizards will mix and match their MAGIC: THE GATHERING decks on a screen that allows sorting by color, type and more.

First, you shuffle your respective decks and have the opposing wizard cut your own deck to select an ante (the card for which you are dueling). Next, each wizard deals out a hand of seven cards and sets the rest down as the library (i.e. draw pile). Then, the space immediately in front of each wizard is the territory (where you will place cards which are in play) and the discard pile becomes the graveyard. Each turn, you draw a new card from your deck and either play one of the eight cards now in your hand or discard one. You may only play one land card (i.e. mana source) per turn and attack only once with as many or as few of your enchanted creatures as you wish. You have the option of tapping as many or as few of your power sources as you choose and, to make it simple, the cards themselves tell you how many power

points (and what type of power points) you need to accomplish certain actions. At the end of your turn, your opponent receives damage for any hits placed upon her and you take damage for any tapped power points that you did not use. Then, the cycle repeats for your opponent's turn until one or the other of you has taken damage equivalent to 20 life points.

What makes the game particularly interesting is that you must have the right kind of power in your possession to energize a given spell. Otherwise, that card is temporarily useless. So, you must be careful to build your deck to balance power and spells. Further, with more than 1,000 cards currently available, there is almost always a counterspell for every attack you want to make. It is simply a matter of whether your opponent has the right power/card combination to thwart your attacks or not.

WIRED WIZARDS?

So, if the game is so elegant as a pure card game, why would anyone want to experience it on the computer? There are economic, tutorial, practical, aesthetic and social reasons for doing so. In terms of economics, **Wizards of the Coast**'s MAGIC: THE GATHERING has become such a collectable phenomenon that experts estimate that it would cost circa $10,000 to get *one* of every card in the original and FALLEN EMPIRES set, three times that cost to get the multiple copies of those cards necessary to construct a "killer" deck. Playing the computer game will allow gamers to experience the challenge of the game and the beauty of the illustrated cards without having to invest significant amounts of capital. It also allows you to play without wearing out your existing cards.

In terms of tutorial, the computer game will allow gamers to overcome two thresholds: game mechanics and basic strategy. It will allow you to construct differing styles of decks and compete against differing styles of play, since each artificial opponent's strategy will be build around its specific decks. That doesn't mean, of course, that the artificial conjurers are chopped liver. As a test, producer David Etheredge put his AI against a local tournament champion. The test AI won three out of the four games.

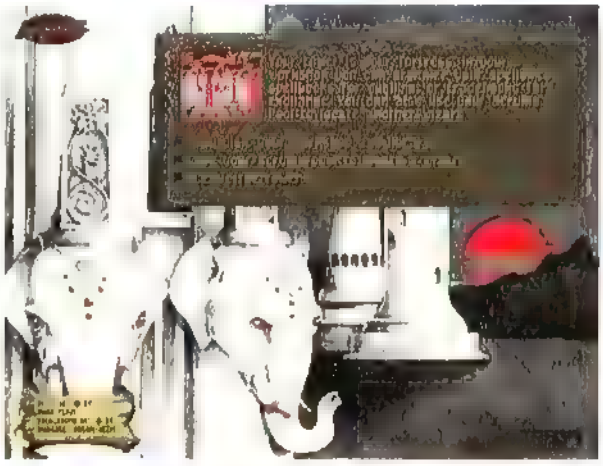
Also, playing solitaire will often allow you to see cards that you don't own and discover how they work, just in case you experience them when playing the card game. Plus, as will be described later, the campaign game looks very interesting.

As far as the game's practical appeal, the rule-based database will handle rules interpretations transparently. If you don't believe that there are lots of questions about rule interpretations, just check out one of the MAGIC: THE GATHERING web pages on the Internet (like **http://www.public.iastate.edu/~mikep/me/general/magic/index.html** or **http://skat.usc.edu:1701/mosaic/ magic. html**) or read some of the columns in *The Duelist*, the magazine dedicated to the card game. Tom Wylie, one of the official rules interpreters for Wizards of the Coast, spent an entire week with the programming team at MicroProse, going over timing situations and rules interpretations so that two human players can make moves simultaneously and the computer can referee the correct order. So, theoretically, programmers Jeff Billings and Tim Trzepacz have created a game that can be played faster

and smoother over the modem than with decks of cards

The pragmatic interface design is also smooth, allowing you to manipulate your playing hand like a Rolodex-style file and to display the five layers of cards in play (Enchantments, Lands, Spells, Artifacts and Creatures) at will. Want the details on a particular card's characteristics? You simply click on the illustration and a dialogue box pops up with the necessary information. In addition, the Wizard's Workshop module allows you to sort all of the cards in your inventory by type, mana color and function. It's a fast way to assemble a deck for future use or for on-line trading purposes.

Aesthetically, the computer game will be every bit as beautiful as the card game. There are several different duel screens, each thematically dealing with a different style of magic. You can even play with portions of the illustrated frames around the dueling surfaces, moving animated rats or Aladdin's lamps as you think over possible moves, or change the cursor to skeletal fingers or arrows, as you please. Also, your own on-screen homunculus can be created via a FaceMaker module which lets you choose from 29 basic wizards with six or seven layers of options with one to five options each. It uses a paper doll concept that lets you build and dress your wizard according to your custom ideal.

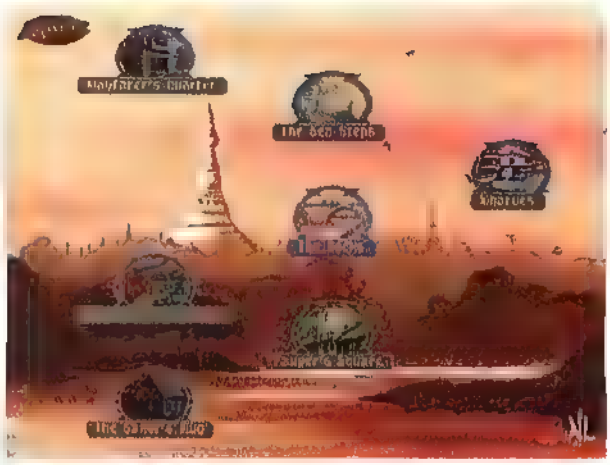


IT COULD HAPPEN! The "overgame" is event-driven with each experience leading the gamer toward dueling the game's artificial opponents.

WIZARDS OF THE HOST

Finally, the social aspect is one of broadened horizons, new vistas. In addition to being able to play head-to-head by a direct modem connection, imagine being able to duel against the designer of the card game, national tournament champions, and the programmers of the computer game's logic via an on-line service. Imagine being able to trade digital cards with anyone in the country and view them instantly. Imagine being able to compete in national tournaments in order to win both games and collectables from **MicroProse** and **Wizards of the Coast. Simutronics** (GEMSTONE III, CYBERSTRIKE, MODUS OPERANDI) will be the developer responsible for integrating the boxed games and network games together. They will build the host environment, a multi-functional referee which will keep track of the universal inventory and individual player's inventory of cards to make sure that no one succombs to cheating hackers.

Such are some of the reasons for transforming the card game into an on-line experience. I think they are good ones. Of course, since the inventory for the network version of the game is adjudicated by the host computer, this will naturally mean that unscrupulous gamers playing direct connect will be able to build impossible decks with innumerable Black Lotus cards and other rare gems. Still, the connectivity should be interesting.



OFF TO SEE THE WIZARDS In the "overgame," solitaire wizards will explore a map by choosing locations and following up on clues. Many clues lead to duels.

THE ROAD TO SHANDALAR

One of the most interesting new wrinkles in the computer version of MAGIC: THE GATHERING is what Arnold Hendrick calls, "the overgame" or "Heir to the Tower." Hendrick, you may recall, was the scripter behind the adventures in DARKLANDS (bugs notwithstanding, there were some pretty innovative touches in that CRPG). So, it is not surprising that Herr Hendrick has given us a cross between a CRPG and an adventure game in order to encourage us to learn the rules of the card game and raise our skill level from Apprentice through Initiate, Master, Lord, High Master and on to Magelord. You begin as a promising apprentice adept in the city of Ardestan, the center of power and knowledge for the fictional land of Shandalar. (Shandalar is the game land for the computer version of MAGIC, just as Dominia is the game land for the card game.) Then, before you can even finish exploring more than a few graphic maps representing

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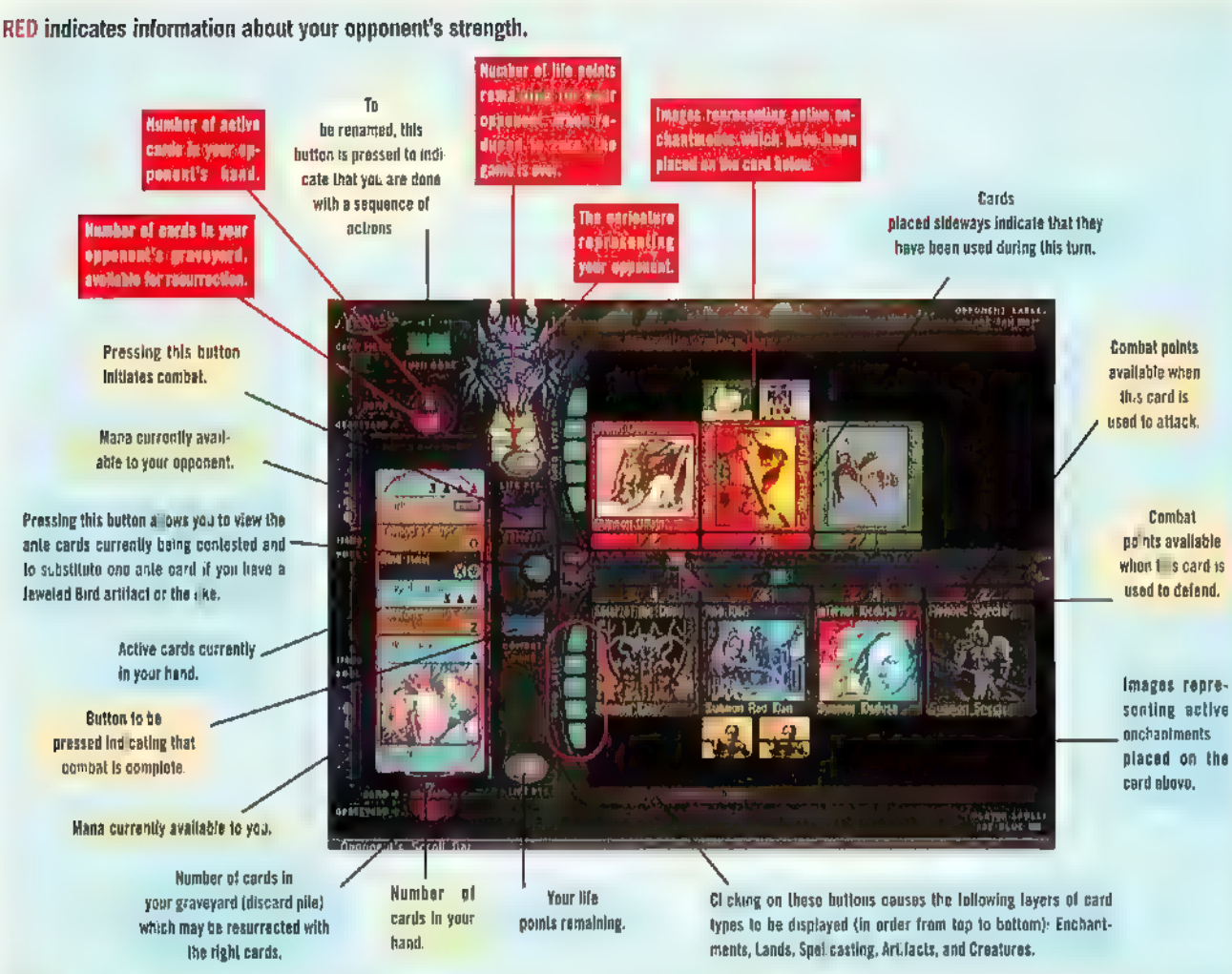

Ardestan, you are drawn into the main plotline—the rationale for seeking out other wizards and dueling them.

As in DARKLANDS, there are also little side quests that will enable you to improve your skill and amass additional cards. Riddling sphinxes in the wilderness, raiding nomads who insist that you duel against them, and an ultimate Foozle to confront. There are arenas where you can confront artificial enchanters in duels where ante cards are at risk, where ante cards are returned after experience points are gained, and where neither experience points nor ante cards are at risk. There are bazaars and taverns where trades may be made, as well as rumors to glean, places to explore, and impromptu duels to fight, all accessed by simple point and click maps. In short, the adventure is designed to pull you quickly into playing and keep you playing, whether solitaire or on-line.

Of course, as everyone connected with the computer version of MAGIC: THE GATHERING will tell you, the purpose of the computer-driven sorcerers is to tutor you prior to joining the on-line game. Remember, part of the game's name is "Gathering" and that means it must be social to be successful. So, these opponents are merely obstacles with particular thematic goals to improve your play. Finally, there will be several locations in Shandalar with will be analogous to "chat" rooms which will be available on the network and serve up to 100 wizards at a time. Using this geography, gamers will be able to navigate around the network and find the trading and challenge opportunities they desire.

DO YOU BELIEVE IN MAGIC?

Whether you are already a MAGIC: THE GATHERING fanatic or, like many of us in the CGW offices, have stayed away from the game in order to avoid getting caught in the collecting frenzy of the last couple of years, the MAGIC: THE GATHERING computer game has the potential of opening a new portal into this dangerous dimension of gaming addiction. Do you believe in MAGIC? I can no longer claim that I don't.

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Earn Your WINGS!

Join Two Real-World Pilots As They Test Fly The Gaming World's Best Flight Simulations

by John and Bob Nolan

After growing up as sons of a career Air Force pilot, going through USAF pilot training, flying Air Force jets, and being hired by major airlines, it suddenly dawned on us that we were sort of "into" aviation. We also realized that we were never going to be able to afford our own P-51 Mustangs to fulfill our flight fantasies. So we did the next best thing. Combining some cash, 48 years of flight experience, and over 25,000 flying hours, we bought two old World War II trainers and two 486 computers. We fly the airplanes for the nostalgic joy of open cockpit flying and the computers to satisfy the Walter Mitty fighter pilot in us. We're both sure we'd have been leading aces in "the big one," if we'd have been born early enough...and managed to live long enough

Of course, not everyone is so fortunate to have gone to flight school and bought planes—which brings us to the benefits of computer flight simulations. First of all, it won't cost you half a million dollars to own a P-51. Most games can be had for about 50 dollars. Secondly, you won't be burning two dollar-per-gallon avgas at rates that can very easily exceed 50 gallons an hour. You can fly against other cyberspace aces for as little as two dollars an hour or against the computer for no charge. Your maintenance costs will be essentially zero and you won't be tracking dirty engine oil onto your new cream carpet. Most importantly, if you crash or get shot down, your loved ones won't have to attend a weepy ceremony to inter your remains in a small brass matchbox. It is cheap and it is fun.

But is it as much fun as actually flying an aircraft? That depends to a great degree upon how realistic the simulation seems. At every major airline, in rooms the size of a three car garage, there are huge, six axis, full-motion flight simulators. These behemoths are surrounded by mainframe computers and hydraulic jacks to provide totally realistic motion and graphics. The FAA has certified these machines as so realistic that a pilot need never fly a real aircraft during his checkout. His first flight in an actual aircraft will be "on the line" with passengers aboard. After having flown real aircraft, what do you think is the most common comment of these crews upon exiting these expensive airline computer marvels? "It doesn't fly like the real thing."

So, unless you have a few spare million and a huge empty garage, you are not even going to approach "total realism" in a flight simulation. Nevertheless, some of the currently available PC flight sims will make your hands clammy, your mouth dry, your neck hairs stand up and sweat trickle down your rib cage. They provide the "mental feel" if not the rocking, rolling, g-loaded "physical feel" of air combat.

WHAT'S IN A SIM

The primary factors in offering a realistic flight experience are good graphics, an accurate flight model and some sort of "purpose" to the simulation. You are not going to feel like Chuck Yeager if your P-51 is a boxy, gray shape with few instruments—especially if you're chasing an equally non-descript Me-109 across a featureless blue sky. The environment in which you operate also requires attention to detail. Cloudless skies and featureless terrain are not conducive to creating the illusion of flight.

You also need your computer aircraft to suffer the same limitations and enjoy the same advantages as its real counterpart. Looking around the sky and into your cockpit would ideally be as easy as it would be in an aircraft. The views available should be realistic. The flight model must accurately represent the controls and performance available in the aircraft you are

simulating. A P-51 that can climb vertically like an F-16 is ridiculous and detracts from the mental feel we are seeking. The controls should also be representative of your aircraft. While we are substituting a keyboard for switches and levers, controls should be accurately represented and relatively straightforward to use while having a "normal" effect. In all computer simulations, however, aircraft systems and controls have been vastly simplified. They had to be: the customer base for a game that takes six weeks of ground school training to get airborne is probably zero!

Lastly, there must be some sort of "mission" or "purpose" to the game or you will soon become bored. Some games allow you to plan missions or fly "campaigns." They allow you to deal with continually varying situations. A game that repeatedly puts you in the same situations is usually soon mastered and removed from the hard drive.

In short, a good computer simulation provides graphics that make you feel as if you are actually sitting in the cockpit about to blast a Zero out of the sky. It is challenging to fly well, accurately represents the capabilities of the selected aircraft, and presents continually varying challenges.

THE TEST FLIGHTS

With the ideal simulation in mind, we'll take a look at the wide variety of flight simulations available and see how they stand up against our demands. Our purview will span the history of flight, from the first World War, to the Second, and on through the modern era, focusing on simulations that are currently available in one form or another. We'll also take some quick glimpses at the simulations that will be released over the next few months.

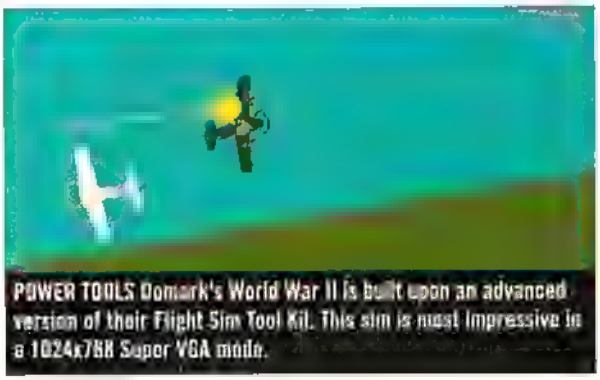
The games we'll look at can operate on three levels. All of the games allow you to challenge the computer artificial intelligence provided by the game designers. In this basic mode you square off against a computer programmer's idea of an enemy flier. The next level allows you to link with another fighter pilot via modem and pit your skills against a human opponent. Lastly, there are opportunities to play against multiple human opponents via on-line services or networks.

LEVEL ONE: COMPUTERIZED CLAY PIGEONS

As soon as you get these games loaded, you'll want to jump into a dogfight. Most of them provide an "instant action" scenario that will quickly put you into combat. You'll be flying against Captain Aay Eye, the fearsome computer ace. Some AI actually fights quite well using good tactics; other computer pilots just become incredibly accurate shooters. In any event, the lower levels of AI soon become a repetitive shooting game like skeet or trap; you can kill at will. At the highest levels of most games you'd better pay attention or you'll be the puff of dust hanging in the sky!

DOMARK'S WORLD WAR II

Through no fault of its own, **Domark's** WORLD WAR II started out with a disadvantage; despite excellent help from Domark, our video card would not run it in SVGA. We had to settle for VGA and the VGA was good, but we were disappointed not to have tried the 1024x768 graphic resolution mode available when using a video card with an S3 accelerator chip. The game allows you to play a Midway or D-Day scenario, flying for the Allies, the Germans or the Japanese. Each scenario has six different missions, and your choice of country will dictate which of the six available planes you will fly. You may select from four different skill levels with "Veteran" being the most realistic. The flight control model seems very sluggish with a somewhat jerky reaction. Stalls are easily recovered and not very realistic, and we were unable to achieve a true spin. G-effects are modeled and are adequate. The enemy is not particularly good at air combat maneuvering, but they know how to shoot! All in all this seems like a flight sim from a much earlier sim generation. The lack of campaign functions or career opportunities contribute to this impression.



POWER TOOLS Domark's World War II is built upon an advanced version of their Flight Sim Tool Kit. This sim is most impressive in a 1024x768 Super VGA mode.

DYNAMIX' "ACES OVER..." SERIES

The WWII games from **Dynamix** are really variations on a theme. These games are easy to play and don't take much time to learn. If you have played one, you have played them all. The artwork changes but the game play and the artificial intelligence don't. The level of performance realism here is at the lowest acceptable level, but it is acceptable. All of the primary flight control (elevator, aileron, and rudder) inputs work; spins, blackouts and "wounding" are modeled; effects and recovery from these problems generally follow real-world experiences. With a little more realistic flight modeling these games could be awesome. The graphics are good but you always know you are looking at a drawing of an aircraft. The cockpit interior art is minimal and drab; it does not induce a feeling of "being there." Enemy artificial intelligence is not too good; again, increasing the enemy ability to "Expert" seems only to make their gunnery capabilities phenomenal.

After saying all of these negative things, however,

ALONE IN THE DARK 3

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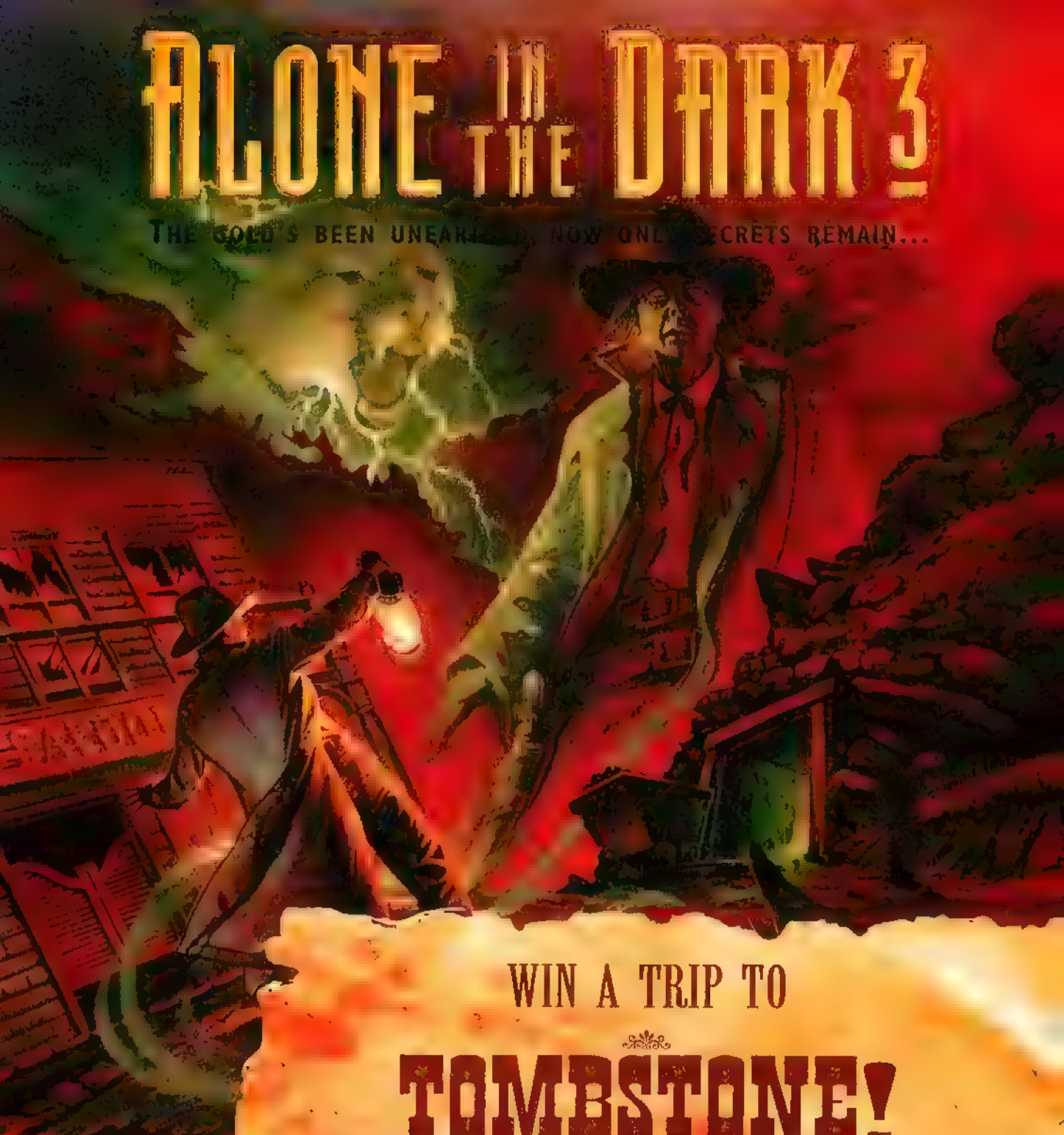

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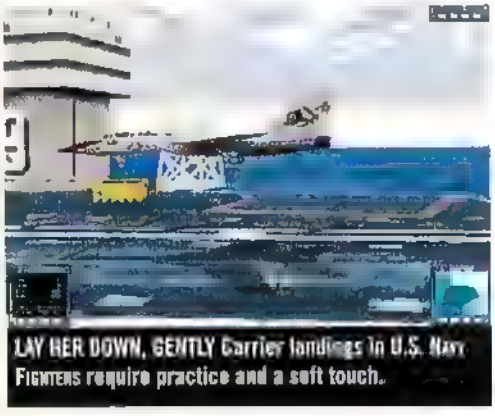
we must add that the whole is much greater than the parts. These games are interesting and entertaining and do provide many varied missions and a campaign option. We really enjoyed dueling the great aces; the best will give you a tough fight if you don't use your choice of aircraft correctly. These games are worth the drive space, especially if you have a few young pilots around the house

ELECTRONIC ARTS' U.S. NAVY FIGHTERS

Electronic Arts' most recent release is U.S. NAVY FIGHTERS, a graphically stunning presentation of carrier-based aviation. It is organized in the FALCON vein, with 14 training sorties to familiarize yourself with the available aircraft and missions. There are another 36 sorties that let you put your training to good use. The Quick Mission Creator allows you to easily set up an encounter with the bad guys, with the computer handling the details. The Pro Mission Creator will let you design a very complex mission involving multiple wings, ground targets and air defenses. Lastly, there is the campaign in the Ukraine with 50 separate missions.



LAY HER DOWN, GENTLY Carrier landings in U.S. NAVY FIGHTERS require practice and a soft touch.

This game easily wins the jet game graphics award—no other even comes close. It is simply beautiful. The rear view mirrors even work just the way they should! The sun blindness feature is the one everyone else will be copying. On the flight modeling end, g-effects are difficult to induce. We loaded up eight positive and three negative g's without changing the screen at all. (These sailors are tough!) Every once in a while we could get the g-effects to kick in, and when they did, they were average for the genre. The controls are very smooth and effective, as they should be in a high performance jet. On the other hand, the stalls and spins are very simplistic and very quickly and easily recovered. The planes also seem to retain their energy extremely well, so it is hard to get slow. You can go a very long way at idle power, suggesting that the drag computations may be off

The enemy skill level is mediocre. The missile fights tend to be brief if you set up your shot correctly, and the enemy pilots tend to be very predictable in their maneuvers when flying in the "guns only" dogfights. The FALCON series definitely has more difficult adversaries and more "depth" to the play possibilities. Despite this, U.S. NAVY FIGHTERS is still a good game, and we found ourselves playing it quite often due to the graphics. With a modem head-to-head play option, it would easily be our favorite jet game. Be advised that it is a demanding game for a computer to run, particularly with all the detail on high, texture and shading enabled. You need a very fast processor and lots of RAM

EMPIRE'S DAWN PATROL

If you took the **Compton's** encyclopedia group and mated it with the designers of **Dynamix's** RED BARON, you'd get something like **Empire's** DAWN PATROL. This World War I flight simulation has a unique structure to its design. The player is presented with a book of four chapters, the first of which offers mission-oriented challenges; the second allows you to relive significant missions in the careers of 15 famous aces, the third bases the action around 14 particular types of aircraft; and the last one allows you to create your own career. In any chapter, you may fly for the Allies or the Germans

The graphics in this game are excellent, although the actual view screen is a little small. The aircraft are colorful and well rendered. The flight model leaves a little to be desired, as spins are not modeled and stalls are very easily recovered from. In addition, you can be hanging on the edge of the stall and suddenly execute an amazing hi-g hi-rate turn into your enemy without stalling.

Be prepared to spend a long time familiarizing yourself with the view controls. While the designers have undoubtedly set a record for the most views ever in a flight sim, the view controls are not intuitive. You will log many, many hours on this sim before you become proficient in keeping the bandit in view. Gunnery is slightly challenging on "hard targets," but with a steady hand, you will score. Enemy skill at the "high" level is good, but not as tough as it should be. Overall, this game has a lot of features to hold your interest. If the view functions were easier to use, it would be much, much better

LOOKS GOOD GOING DOWN The graphics are stunning in DAWN PATROL, and the interface is like a flight encyclopedia.

KESMAI'S AIR WARRIOR

AIR WARRIOR by **Kesmai** is a different type of game. For starters, it comes in two flavors: a stand-alone game, and an on-line, multiplayer version, which we will talk about later. The play style also comes in two flavors: Half Time and Real Time. Real Time attempts to be as close to reality as possible; for example, most aircraft have a more realistic ammo load of about 20 seconds of firing. Half Time slows down play to half of the RT rate and eliminates spins and blackouts while giving you unrealistically high ammo loads and so forth. Playing either version against the computer AI is most akin to practicing golf with a cup in your living room. It is not all that much fun, but if you are going to be any good at the on-line multiplayer game, you must practice.

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Circle Reader Service #77

AIR WARRIOR models World War II aircraft of all nations, and you can mix and match as you like. You may fly Spitfire versus Spitfire or whatever suits your imagination. The Super VGA artwork of your aircraft is superb. The enemy planes are very good, but not as detailed as they should be, especially at moderate ranges. Terrain essentially has no detail. Whatever your altitude, all ground is the same color of green, water the same color of blue. This can make it a little tough to keep from swallowing sod when you're fighting down in the dirt. It undoubtedly speeds up the frame rate, though.

TRAINER GAME The packaged version of Air Warrior is really only practice for on-line action.

Flight controls are generally good, with a few inaccuracies caused by the flight modeling, particularly when you are slow and inverted. Spins are also modeled but recovery techniques are not realistic or consistent; you can recover many spins with a flick of counter aileron. Blackout modeling is poor with the effects more akin to an on/off light switch than actual graying out from g's.

AIR WARRIOR has the best view controls by far, employing the numeric keypad in a logical, intuitive manner with views that slightly overlap. There are a total of 18 easy-to-use views, so it is simple to keep a bandit in sight. Used with a joystick with a "top hat" nob, the view control is the best in the business.

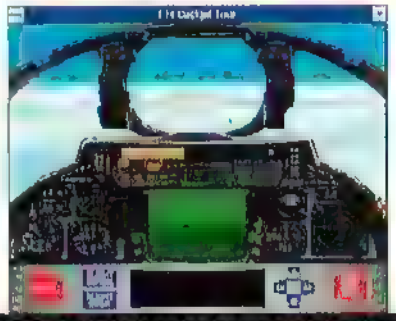
As far as missions go, you can engage up to ten enemy planes at once in a continuous battle scenario. You can bomb as well, using fighters and bombers. The enemy AI is weak, even in the "ace" mode. Soon you'll be killing two or three aces with one RT load of ammo; like a lamb to the slaughter, you'll soon be ready to go on-line.

MICROPROSE'S F-14 FLEET DEFENDER

F-14 FLEET DEFENDER is the latest in a long series of "jet" games from MicroProse. Taking lessons from MicroProse's F-15 STRIKE EAGLE series, F-14 FLEET DEFENDER offers excellent graphics, flight modeling and g-effects. The only flaw in flight modeling is in spin characteristics; when you run out of airspeed, the aircraft just finally drops nose low no matter how much you abuse the flight controls.

Since this aircraft is a two-seater, you will be hopping back and forth between cockpits if you wish to make maximum use of your aircraft's ability. While this certainly adds realism to the game, we found we prefer single-seaters. The game offers campaign options that allow you to progress through numerous related missions. How well you do on each mission affects what comes next, as well as the overall success of the campaign. There are many hours of good game play here.

MAY I RIDE YOUR SIX? A Japanese Zero gets tail-gated in the graphically rich 1942: PACIFIC AIR WAR.



HOT SEATS You'll be hopping between pilot and radar mode in FLEET DEFENDER's dual seater F-14.

The FLEET DEFENDER GOLD edition requires Windows 3.1 or later. GOLD adds six new campaigns, two new theaters and an unlimited mission builder to the previous program. It also includes an interactive cockpit tour and two instructional modules to have you up and flying in no time.

MICROPROSE'S 1942: THE PACIFIC AIR WAR GOLD

MicroProse's 1942: THE PACIFIC AIR WAR GOLD is for the piston engine fanatics. The graphics are beautiful, some of the best to be found in these air combat games. All objects are accurately rendered and there is lots of detail, although the "bogies" are little more than blurry dots until you are right on top of them. That sure needs a fix. While they are at it, they can work on the instrument panels. The panels are beautiful renditions of actual cockpits, but they are far too blurry and washed out, making it very hard to read the altimeter in a dogfight.

Flight modeling is pretty well done. Ailerons, elevators and rudders all have the desired effects. Spin entry is very realistic, recovery takes a very smooth procedure, at least 2500 feet of altitude, and will require lots of practice. Blackout g-effects are also very good. You must pay attention to your throttle settings or you can damage the engine, just as in actual flying. The gunnery model seems very realistic; you will have to shoot well to smoke the bandit. Overall, this one gives the feel and workload of flight to a greater degree than most games.

You can fight on either the American or Japanese side, and the normal flight simulator campaign options are available to you as a pilot. You can fly several historically accurate air engagements on various levels of play. You can even play this as a strategy and tactics game by selecting a historical "carrier battle" scenario; here you will act as the admiral and direct your forces on the grand scale.

The GOLD edit on adds six new aircraft types, two new theaters, modem play, and hundreds of new missions. It also includes a multimedia flight school similar to the one in FLEET DEFENDER GOLD with some great film clips and good instruction. The modem capability makes it a whole new game, so upgrade if you need too.

MICROSOFT'S FLIGHT SIMULATOR 5.0 AND 5.1

Microsoft's FLIGHT SIMULATOR 5.0 is the only civilian sim currently worth mentioning. It is also the only one that will pay for itself several times over. If you are thinking about getting a pilot's license, this is the one

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to have. If you work at the lesson plans and really practice your procedures you will save tons of time and money when you start flying real airplanes. You won't learn how to fly a real airplane, but you will be familiar with the controls and their effects and the procedures required for their proper use.

The graphics here are very good and the flight model accurate. The game includes a Flight School and will track your progress. If you will give this program solid effort you will reduce the actual flight time it takes to get your license by a significant amount.

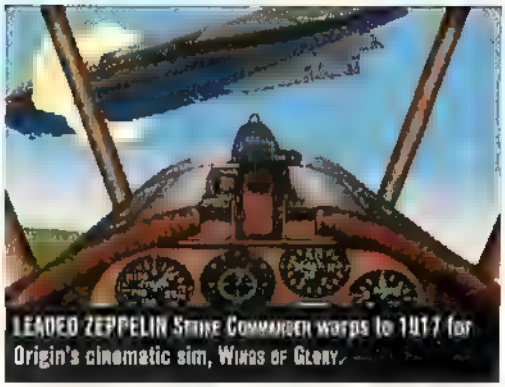
The new 5.1 version includes new "Flight Challenges" like landing a Cessna 182 on the Nimitz, recovering from a spin, buzzing downtown Chicago, and doing some low visibility instrument approaches. These challenges are meant to add more of a "game" aspect. Most are simple and easily mastered, although they do provide a diversion from "flight school." The 5.1 version also includes plenty of new scenery and airports, and new weather effects to make your simulated life interesting. In addition, the flight model seems to have been improved with smoother controls. While we wouldn't feel the need to get 5.1 as an update, we would buy it over the 5.0 version.

CIVIE SIM SIM Microsoft's Flight Sim 5 is the next best thing to private lessons for learning civilian flight.

ORIGIN'S WINGS OF GLORY

Wings of Glory is the latest "flight sim with a storyline" from **Origin Systems**. Set in France, 1917, the player has various air combat adventures over the trenches of WWI.

As you might expect, realism is a secondary consideration for this game—it's the overall game experience that counts. We were unable to make these aircraft do anything more than a minor spin entry, and the recovery is extremely simplified: release the stick for a moment and you're fine. Otherwise, the flight control model is not too bad. You will notice that rolling without using the rudder is very slow, as it should be. You will be unable to generate any g-effects on vision no matter how hard you pull at various airspeeds. When you do pull hard, though, there's a great audio effect of wings creaking that is almost worth the price of the game by itself.



LEADED ZEPPELIN Strike Commander warps to 1917 for Origin's cinematic sim, Wings of Glory.

Origin got enough feedback from players wanting more items in the flight model, so they created a patch "GLORY.EXE" that adds a few features. If you download this file from the Origin BBS, you can add an up/forward (Lewis Gun) view to all the aircraft, make the aircraft easier to spin, add g-induced blackouts, and "jet like" control response. In our opinion, this download is mandatory just for the up/forward view. The spins are easier to induce, but they are still easy to recover. With the patch, if you've lined up a bogey and your Armour Star "ham hands" get rough, you will spin and have to line him up all over again. We still could not induce any blackouts since the wings always ripped off first. The patch README file mentions that it is very hard to do unless you turn wing shearing off. Even then we were unable to induce it, but it must be there somewhere!

In general, the graphics are very, very good. The external shots of airplanes going down are especially great. There is a lot of detail in the graphic model, even down to the pilot's scarves flapping in the breeze. The enemy artificial intelligence is good in the "ace" mode, but once again, the main improvement is in gunnery.

With respect to the story aspect of the game, you will have to make your own decision. We found ourselves desperately hammering on the escape key to get on with the flying. Perhaps this is more because it takes so long to load the scenes from the CD. Of course, you can always just create your own air combat missions, which are as much fun as the storyline. We found we really enjoyed this game once we installed the new patch file. It's good to see the game get continued support from Origin.

SPECTRUM HOLOBYTE'S FALCON LINE

The Falcon Gold Edition includes Falcon 3.0, Operation Fighting Tiger, MiG-29, and Hornet from **Spectrum HoloByte**. If you're a big Falcon fan, it might be worth the price of the new CD just to have all the games and numerous patch files in one place.

These games are but a variation on a theme; you're pretty much just adding new planes and theaters. It's clear that the graphics have been surpassed by newer games. The rather crude angular shapes of the aircraft were great when they were first introduced, but that was a while ago.

Still, we feel this series of games is perhaps the most realistic of all the simulations. The flight model, controls and g-effects are good, probably the best of all of these jet games. The mission types and campaigns are well designed with your successes and failures affecting the next mission and overall results. Your abilities as flight leader are important, but your decision-making abilities as squadron commander have a major effect on the campaigns' success. The view methods, while innovative at the time, are probably the weakest part of Spectrum HoloByte's work. The padlock view, supposedly the solution to screen imitation of the real world, is tough to get used to and is unlike anything you will experience in actual flight.

THE AGING KING No one has yet topped Falcon 3 in the modern air combat arena.

The learning curve for Falcon or MiG-29 is steep, and the manuals for each run about 400 pages! It will take you a long time to be deadly at the most realistic levels. If you've got the time to invest, these are quite good games, especially if you enjoy campaigns that will last a while.

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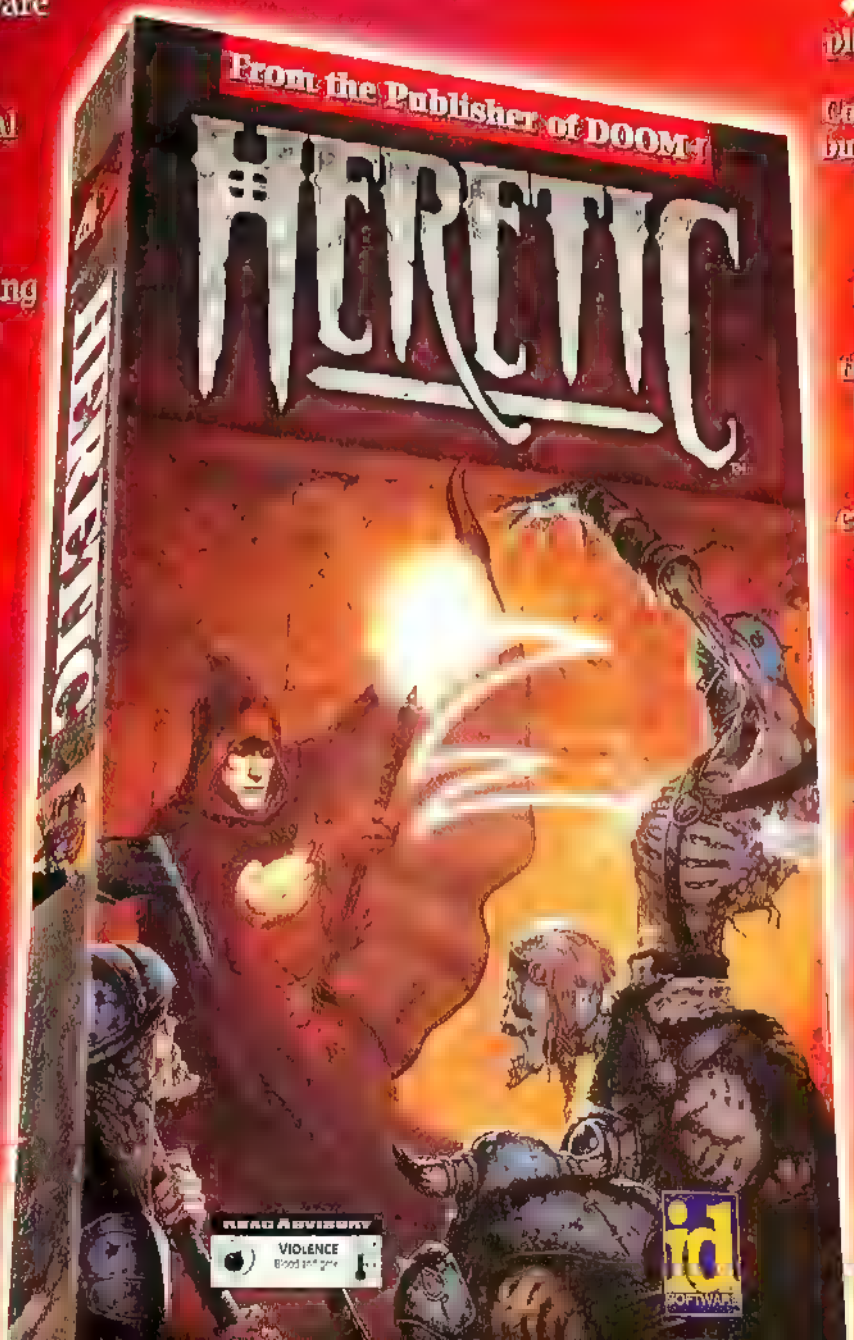

FEATURES

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Level Two: Modem Play
Separating the Men from the Boys

Flight simulations have more to offer than simply playing against the programmed intelligence; there's also the excitement of playing against another human via modem. Although not all games support this option, it is clearly a worthwhile bonus, and we expect it to become a mandatory item for successful games in the future. Human opponents are far more challenging and interesting than computer AI, especially if you have a sneaky, underhanded, devious brother who is almost as good a stick as you are. In this group, Kesmai's AIR WARRIOR, Spectrum HoloByte's FALCON group, 1942: PAW GOLD, and Microsoft's FLIGHT SIMULATOR 5.0 currently have modem capability. We almost wouldn't buy a game that didn't have modem capability—it extends the life of a game indefinitely.

HEAD-TO-HEAD AIR WARRIOR

AIR WARRIOR's modem hook ups are as smooth as silk. Unfortunately, there is only one basic mission—you versus your opponent in any of a number of types of aircraft. Still, you'll never have the same fight twice since you are now dealing with a human opponent. You can dogfight in A-26 bombers if you choose; you can vary the gas loads to improve performance; you can play Half Time or Real Time. You will find getting a kill significantly tougher in Real Time, since you can't waste ammo and things happen twice as fast as they do in HT. The poor blackout model and spin model don't help either. This area is where the game begins to grow addictive, however. Don't say we didn't warn you.

HEAD-TO-HEAD FALCON

The FALCON/MIG/HORNET series also has multiplayer games for up to six players on a network or two players on a modem connection. Two-player games can be duels or allied games. The network allows duels, multi-player allied games, or multi-player opponent games. This is where the excitement really begins! While we were unable to sample the network warfare, the dueling and allied games via modem are a blast, although you are again both fighting a computer in the allied mode. Good wing work is still a powerful reward.

Multiplayer FALCON can easily become an addictive hobby. FALCON "ladder" tournaments can be found on the various on-line services, allowing you to fight opponents of varying skill levels. Be advised, though, if you load and play this on your network at the office you might quickly join the ranks of the unemployed!

BLIPS ON THE RADAR

FLIGHT UNLIMITED BY LOOKING GLASS TECHNOLOGIES

If anything, the FLIGHT UNLIMITED aerobatics simulator will be the ultimate show off piece for your new Pentium. This baby hogs computing power, but the power is put to excellent use. The graphics are simply unbelievable—we're certain you've never seen anything like it on a PC—and the flight modeling is groundbreaking, without question. As you scroll around the 3-D air base (remember, these are the guys who created ULTIMA UNDERWORLD and SYSTEM SHOCK) you'll be able to select from five aerobatic aircraft (Grob 103A, Sukhoi Su31, Pitts Special S-2B, Bellanca Decathlon, and Extra 300S) and choose to take part in 30 interactive flight lessons, ranging from basic flight instruction to insane aerobatic stunts. Pilots who love to loop around the skies at FLIGHT SIMULATOR 5 will go bananas for this stuff, but those who learned to fly with their index fingers on a joystick trigger, well, they might get a little edgy after the wow-power wears off. If anything, you should at least take a look at this product because you'll be looking at the future of simulations.

U.S. MARINE FIGHTERS BY ELECTRONIC ARTS

A regional conflict between the Ukraine, Russia, Japan and U.S. is the setting for this add-on disk to the popular U.S. NAVY FIGHTERS. Pilots will explore the wonders of V/STOL (Vertical/Short Take Off & Landing) and VIFF (Vectoring in Forward Flight) with three vectoring-nozzle craft: the AV-8B Harrier II, FRS.Mk 2 Sea Harrier, and Yak-141 "Freestyle" fighter. The 35 scenarios set on and around the contested Kuril Island chain involve close support missions, interdiction, CAPs, anti-ship strikes, and they involve new weapons like the Snake-eye bomb and LAU rocket pods. You can be certain that the graphics will be superb, but how well the flight model will handle this special type of flight remains to be seen.

Never Lose Sight Of How Pinball Should Be Played.

A truly great pinball game is more than great graphics and spectacular sounds, more than the latest arcade features like 3D ramps and three multi-ball play, more than fast ball movement and precise flipper control, and it's more than being able to see the whole playfield at once so you can aim your shots. A great pinball game has that unique quality of playability and never-ending challenge that keeps you coming back for...*just one more game* and a shot at your new high score!

Washington Post– "Crystal Caliburn perfectly captures the essence of a great pinball machine."

New York Times–"The realism is striking... [Crystal Caliburn] will be at the top of Silicon Santa's gift list this year."

Inside Mac Games– "ARCADE GAME OF THE YEAR"

Computer Game Review– "Crystal Caliburn sets a new standard. For realistic pinball on a computer, there's nothing like this game."

Electronic Entertainment– "Crystal Caliburn is simply the best, most realistic, most challenging pinball simulation for the Macintosh yet." (Rating: 9 out of 10)

GAMES Magazine–"You'll forget you're playing on a two-dimensional computer screen ... the realism is astonishing."

MacUser–"Electronic pinball's Holy Grail." (Rating: 4 ½ out of 5)

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:

MACINTOSH: 13" or larger monitor, 256 colors, and 4MB RAM.

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HEAD-TO-HEAD 1942

In MicroProse's 1942: The Pacific Air War you can fight head-to-head against one of your friends, or team up against the computer's AI. If you choose to play against the computer there are canned missions to run or you may build your own using the mission builder. You'll be limited to a total of six planes in the scenario. MicroProse has included a really nice touch that other designers should think about when considering modem play: a pause feature that can be initiated by either player. When the pizza delivery man comes to the door it's nice to be able to answer knowing that your buddy is not saddling up on your six.

We enjoyed playing 1942 in the modem play mode far more than the regular game. It seems we also prefer a challenging duel more than cooperation against a common enemy. Skip the canned mission, let's duel!

CO-OPERATIVE FLIGHT SIMULATOR 5.0/5.1

Microsoft has modem capability built into Flight Simulator 5.0 and 5.1. Frankly, we don't think anyone will use it very often. There is not much you can do in the dual player mode other than fly in formation. While there is much to be said for a pilot's satisfaction in just being a good leader or good wingman, it loses something on the small screen. You can talk to the other player as you tour the countryside in perfect formation or play "follow the leader." We found ourselves still trying to dogfight without the guns. Make a head-on pass at co-altitude and when you pass abeam, the fight is on. The winner is the first guy to get on the other's six and stay there for a while. This game needs guns!

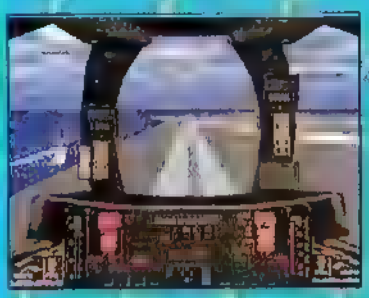
EQUIPMENT CHECK

For most of these games you need top-line equipment to get maximal enjoyment. We used Dell 400/2D machines, 16 Megs of RAM, 486 Meg Hard Drives, Viper VLB video cards with 17 inch monitors and US Robotics 14.4 modems. These machines turned in impressive performances on memory hungry games. Frame rates on Air Warrior were in the upper thirties with all options on. This is good in anyone's book. All this speed and memory provides smooth flowing graphics and quick response to inputs. MicroProse's 1942: The Pacific Air War was tough to handle even for our SuperDells. Frame rate slowed noticeably during multi-plane dogfights. Interestingly enough, these machines handled U.S. Navy Fighters very well if we turned the ground textures off. This game has a reputation for bogging down the most capable machines; rumor has it that the 16 megs of RAM may have helped the most.

FALCON 4 BY SPECTRUM HOLOBYTE

Ah, yes, the one we're all waiting for. The Falcon series of sims has always led the pack in realism, multiplayer options, and engrossing gameplay, and now we're all waiting to see how high Spectrum will raise the standard this time around. Spectrum is promising the world in Falcon 4: a complete, AI-driven virtual battlefield that runs in real time, never pausing for the player; a 3-D rendered virtual airbase where players will attend briefings and talk to fellow pilots in their wing; a completely accurate simulation of cockpit instrumentation, and an AI that will tailor the difficulty of the simulation to the player's level of expertise. Is Spectrum writing a check they can't cash? We certainly hope not. But we're certainly not counting on seeing this one for quite a while. Word has it that the Falcon 4 project has been on hold while the company finishes Star Trek: TNG and Top Gun, so 1996 may even be too optimistic of a ship date.

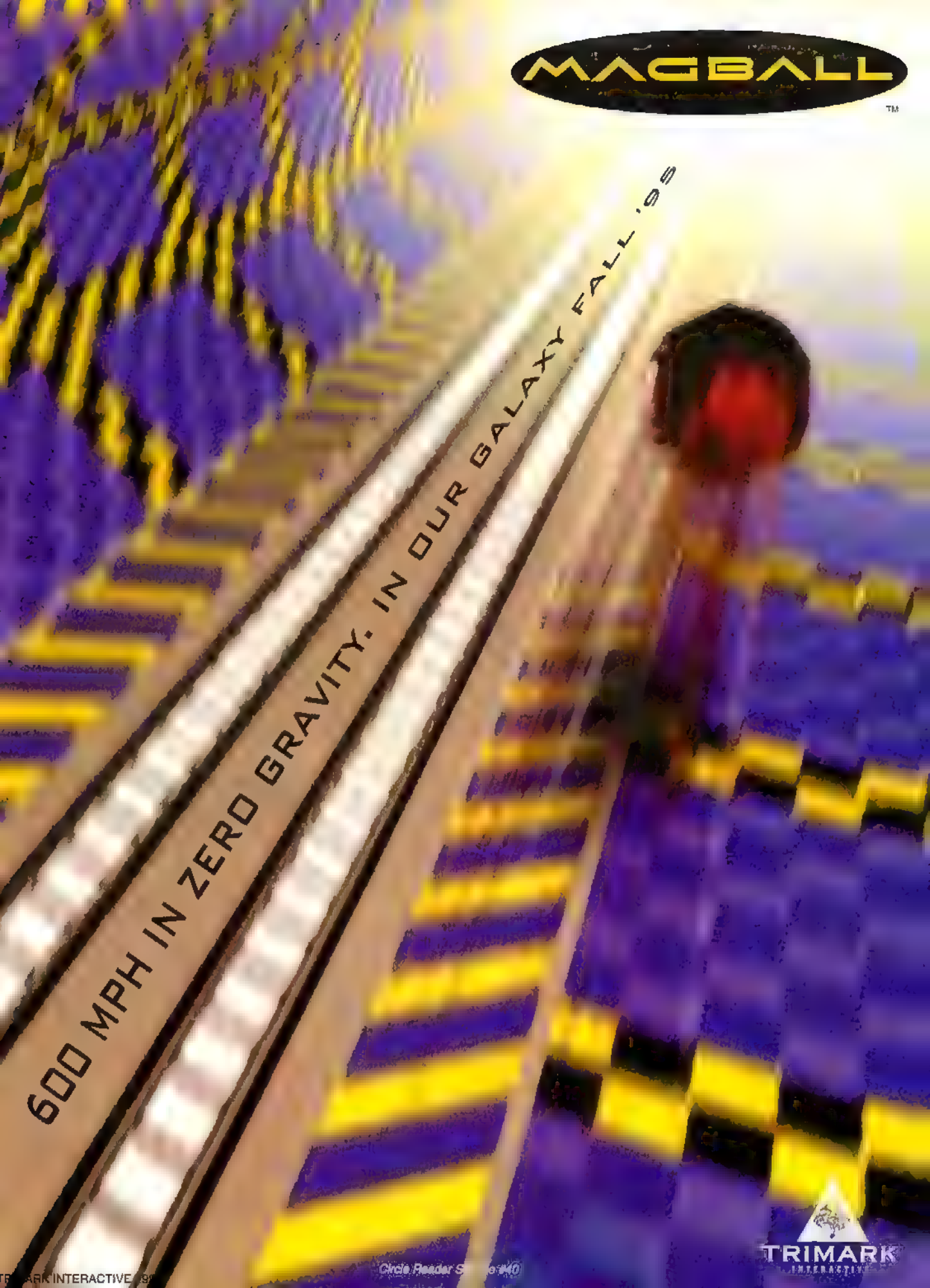
TOP GUN BY SPECTRUM HOLOBYTE



Top Gun is Spectrum's answer to Origin's Strike Commander. It's a story-based simulation that will use full-motion video clips from the 1986 movie of the same name to move a plot along. The graphics appear to be somewhere near the realm of U.S. Navy Fighters, and the instrumentation and flight modeling will be suited to the newbie with that "need for speed." Basically, Spectrum views Top Gun as a fast, fun, and exciting complement to its more serious simulations—something you can hop in and play without reading the fine print of a 400-page manual.

FIGHTER DUEL 2 BY JAEGER SOFTWARE

The developers at Jaeger Software were once revered as demigods in the Amiga flight sim community. Their Fighter Duel and Fighter Duel Pro for the Amiga were ground-breaking simulations in terms of flight modeling, frame rate, and modem play. Now, the Jaeger team has set their sights on the PC community with their Fighter Duel 2. The focus, as always with Jaeger, is on realistic flight modeling and a blazing frame rate, in addition to multiplayer capabilities. Although the terrain and WWII aircraft graphics won't be anything to challenge the Big Boys, the frame rate could possibly be the fastest in the pack. Look for this one this summer.



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Level 3: On-line Combat The Ultimate Challenge

When you get tired of whipping your brother like a red-headed stepchild in modem play there is the ultimate challenge: on-line play. Unfortunately there are only two places to go for this pure excitement at this time. Fortunately, one of them is very good indeed, and another is on the way.

JETFIGHTER III BY MISSION STUDIOS

The latest installment in the Jetfighter line looks to be a vast improvement over previous versions. The sim will include the updated models of three jet craft: the F-16 Falcon, the F/A-18 Hornet, and the F-22 Lightning II. Graphically, we'll see expansive, detailed terrain, texture-mapped aircraft and carriers, and haze, fog, and transparency effects. In keeping with current sim trends, JETFIGHTER III will also have a 3-D modeled aircraft carrier interior in which players can walk around and select mission options. The combat scenario will pit Argentina against Chile, with the player taking part in the U.N.'s attempt to settle the differences. Be watching the skies in early July.

RED BARON ON-LINE

The ImagiNation Network provides a place to play **Dynamix's** RED BARON WWI flight sim on-line. We found the players to be a friendly, helpful group, eager to welcome newcomers. You will find all levels of talent here, from rookies to truly skilled aces. We had our shorts shot off several times, a totally humbling experience for the world's greatest pilots. Up to four pilots can participate at one time, and realism levels are adjustable pretty much as they are in the off-line game.

When you play, you will get ten minutes or three lives to do all the damage you can to the bad guys. The mission is always the same, dogfighting with two to four players in any combination. If you kill all the enemy three times, you may have some time left to nail a few observation balloons for extra points. We have to emphasize the "when you play" part of this. You will find yourself wasting huge amounts of time, at $3.50 an hour, looking for an opponent, setting up a game, and waiting for a free "arena" to play in. Every "game room" has three arenas that can hold up to four players, and that's not enough. On top of the waiting, we had many "warps" where aircraft suddenly and radically change location, making gunnery a little tough. We were also completely dumped out of the INN system several times. On busy nights these problems drove us crazy.

ACES OVER THE WIRE "Warping" effects can make gunnery tricky in INN's RED BARON.

AIR WARRIOR ON-LINE

Mostly, it drove us to Kesmai's AIR WARRIOR. This is where we found true happiness. If you become addicted, you will start spending most of your spare time and piles of your not so spare cash to participate. Three services currently offer access to AIR WARRIOR: GEnie, Delphi and CRIS. On-line AIR WARRIOR is the raison d'être for the stand-alone game—it is why you spend hours sharpening your skills off-line. Here you can fly in an arena with 60 other pilots divided up amongst three generic countries. You can "talk" to and coordinate with your fellow countrymen and your enemies. You may choose to fly the heavies to bomb enemy ground targets and ships, fly fighter-bombers, or just fly a fighter. Eight players can man a B-17 and fly a mission together using the gunner positions. Groups of players form squadrons and fly together on regularly scheduled squad nights.

There are three arenas: Half Time, Real Time and Scenarios. HT and RT characteristics were described previously but scenarios are worthy of special mention. Scenarios are organized every so often to accurately recreate an actual air battle of W.W.II. They are flown repetitively for a few sessions and then work begins on a new one. As this is being written, play continues in "Stalingrad, Into The Cauldron," a HT scenario portraying the Luftwaffe's attempt to resupply the Sixth Army trapped in the city of Stalingrad. The RT enthusiasts are working on "Kursk: Full Metal Depends," recreating the air battles that went on above one of the biggest tank battles on record. Generally speaking, the scenarios are designed, planned and executed by AIR WARRIOR players. There is a tremendous depth of historical and tactical knowledge in the player base, and the Kesmai folks allow them plenty of input. These air battles are very interesting and much effort is made to provide as much realism as possible.

The skill level in AIR WARRIOR ranges from beginning rookies to very expert aces and everything in between. The RT pilots tend to look down on the HT pilots as a lesser breed, but the top pilots in either arena usually do well in any flying game. The prevailing sentiment is "play the one you like to play—after all, it's your money." HT is an easier game to kill and get killed in. RT is more demanding and the kills for rookies are fewer and farther between, so savor them. Both games are incredible fun!

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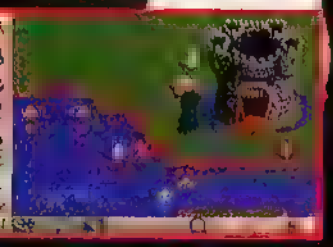

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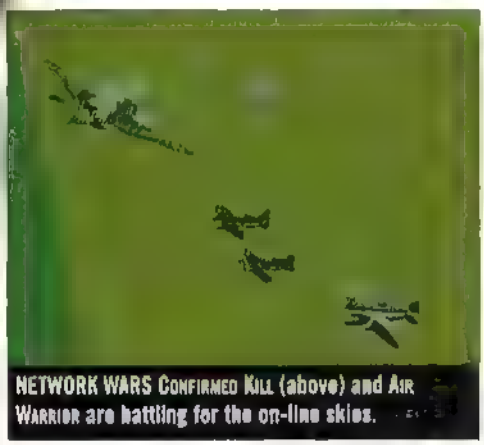
CONFIRMED KILL ON-LINE

AIR WARRIOR will soon have some competition, however. **Domark** and **Integrated Creations** are combining to bring out CONFIRMED KILL, a flight simulation aimed directly at AIR WARRIOR's World War II on-line market. The creator's feel that they have "upped the ante" for Kesmai with better graphics, a 500 player limit, better flight models, more weapon types, and over 60 different types of aircraft. We were able to get in a short period of flying on a Beta version of the game. Our initial impression was that the flight model does indeed feel improved compared to the AIR WARRIOR model. The controls are "crisper," and we didn't notice the need to 'unload" the stick coming over the top as AW requires for best performance. CK uses a force model ' and AW uses a "table model"- a "force model" is the more advanced type. The damage model specifically degrades the part of the aircraft that you hit, so if you saw off the outboard two feet of the wing, the flight model will take that into account. If you hit the engine, the engine fails, if you hit the radiator, white steam will pour out

Graphics were hard to judge in the beta version; only the forward cockpit view was available. Other aircraft seemed somewhat more detailed than AW. We'll have to wait till we see the release version to really make a determination.

CK is being developed by veteran AIR WARRIOR players, so you can expect to see all the options AIR WARRIOR offers and much more. CONFIRMED KILL will provide arena play and scenario play, just as AIR WARRIOR does. All in all, we think CK has great potential, and the stage is set for a battle for the Visa account numbers of on-line flyers.



NETWORK WARS CONFIRMED KILL (above) and AIR WARRIOR are battling for the on-line skies.

RETURN TO BASE

After spending some time with this group of flying games we came to some inescapable conclusions First of all, until the virtual reality helmet comes into common usage, none of these games are really going to be like flying. The limited vision and viewing difficulties inherent in portraying a three dimensional world on a two dimensional screen prevent a truly realistic flight experience. Second, many of the game programmers need to talk to some aerodynamic engineers and pilots to get the flight models to a more realistic state.

If we were going to work on a private pilot's license, Microsoft's FLIGHT SIMULATOR 5.1 would be our first purchase. All you need to get your procedural knowledge started is in the game box. If we wanted a stand-alone game to play versus computer AI it would have to be 1942: THE PACIFIC AIR WAR by MicroProse. It has super graphics with good realism. The modem capability and the ability to play it as a strategy and tactics game make it an attractive package.

If you lean towards the romantic days of wood, wire and canvas the choice is more difficult. DAWN PATROL would be excellent with an easier viewing system, WINGS OF GLORY needs a way to speed up the storyline, and it is past time to update the graphics in RED BARON. We pick WINGS OF GLORY by a whisker because the views are so much easier to use and the graphics are very good.

You Maverick wannabees wanting to recreate *Top Gun* in your living room can't go wrong with U.S. NAVY FIGHTERS. The graphics are awesome if your machine is up to the task. FLEET DEFENDER GOLD would be the second choice. Head-to-head modem play awards go to the FALCON games due to the diversity and depth of missions that you can perform. Multi-player on-line is absolutely dominated by Kesmai's AIR WARRIOR; this is the one game we would have above all others just for the on-line play. We admit it—we're AIR WARRIOR addicts. Still, we are eager to check out CONFIRMED KILL when it debuts.

The time for talk is over, friends. Stroll on out to the flight line and strap that 486 to your "cheeks." Hit the starter, throttle up, and ease the stick back. Keep your head on a swivel and your finger on the trigger. It's a merciless environment up there in the virtual skies and the prize for second place is a smoking hole in the ground. If you're lucky, maybe some nice guy will rake your scorched dog tags out of the glowing embers and mail them to your folks. Good luck!

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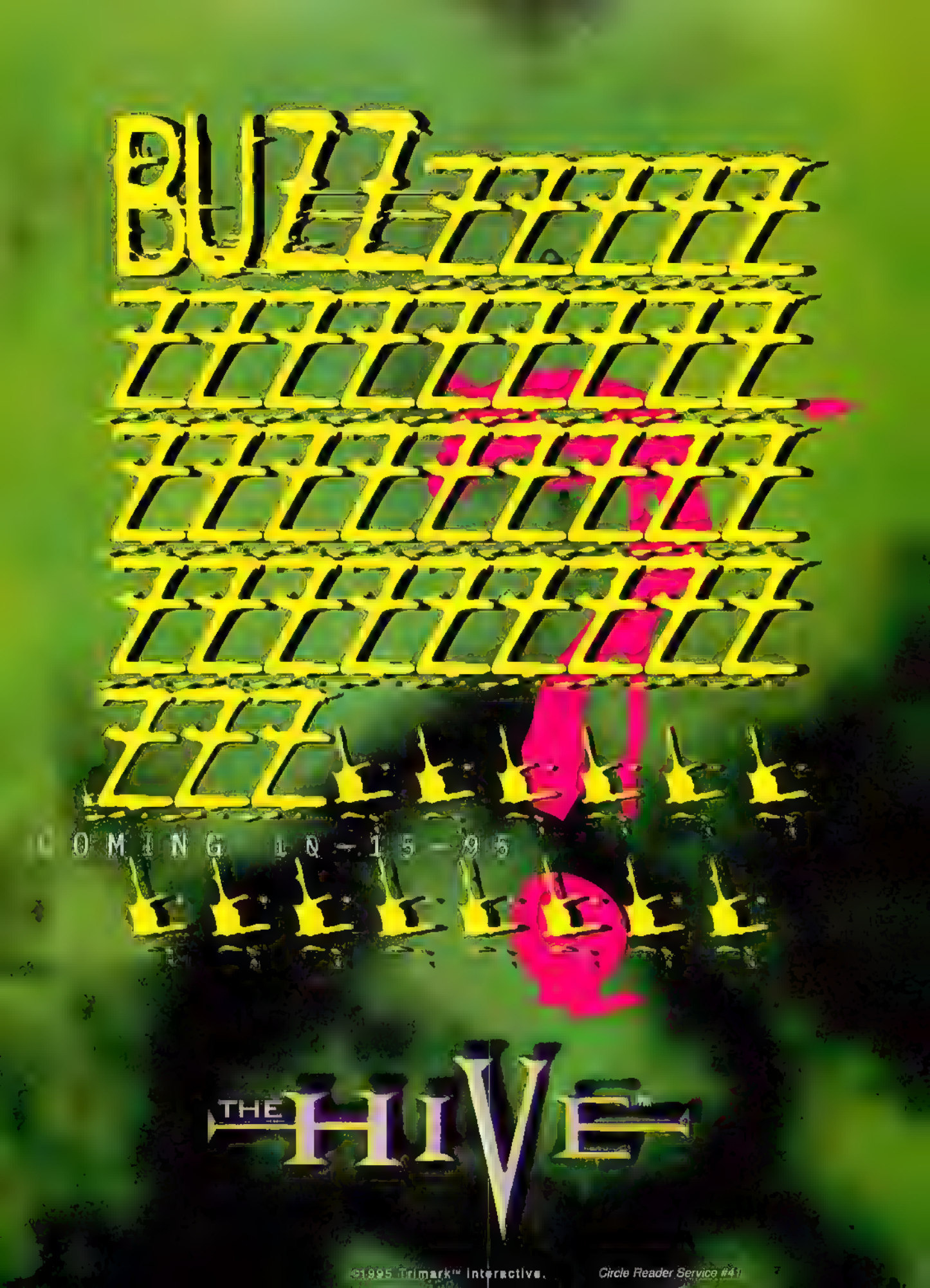

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IS HELL. BUT ONLY IF IT'S DONE
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TEEN
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The **NEAR FUTURE** looms ahead on the horizon like a toxic cloud. Knowledge is power. Technology is deadly. And the information highway is littered with **ROADKILL.** It's the world of *Command & Conquer*™, the frighteningly realistic new strategy game from the creators of *Dune*™ *II*. Here, your quick thinking is **REWARDED** with victory; your **INDECISION,** death. You will choose your side. Build your bases. Gather resources. Attack enemy strongholds. And react as if your life depended on it. Because it does. Your **WEAPONRY?** Unlike any you've experienced before. Hoards of futuristic fighter craft. **THUNDERING** 60-gigawatt ion cannons. And the terrifying

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Circle Reader Service #25

Microsoft Comes Out To Play

WINDOWS 95 Could Mean Good Things For Users Of "High Performance Multimedia Applications," aka Games

by Loyd Case

HAVE YOU EVER INSERTED A CD-ROM GAME INTO A DRIVE AND HAD THE GAME INSTALL ITSELF TO YOUR hard drive?

You will.

Have you ever installed a sound card without having to worry about IRQ, DMA or I/O port conflicts?

You will.

Have you ever bought a hot new piece of hardware without worrying about your games supporting it?

You will.

That is, you will if you're playing the next generation of games on WINDOWS 95, the new operating system from that two-ton gorilla everyone loves to hate, **Microsoft**. Bill Gates and Co. have been working hard on the Bellevue, WA campus to develop an environment that will make the lives of computer users easier—and yes, that includes gamers, or as Microsoft like to put it, "users of high performance multimedia applications." WINDOWS 95 has the potential to give gamers a less hostile environment in which to install games and hardware, in addition to adding more to the gaming experience: more reality, more colors, better resolution and better performance. Will WINDOWS 95 live up to this potential? And even if WINDOWS 95 ships in 1995, will it offer game developers the tools and the performance they need to craft the really superb titles we know are possible? We'll try to cut through some of the hype, as well as some of the negativism surrounding WINDOWS 95 and analyze what it will mean for the gamer and the game developer.

THE PC PROBLEM

As we all know, PC gaming today is fraught with technical peril. Trying to figure out which SuperVGA driver to use for your graphics adapter, whether or not your sound card is General MIDI-compliant and a seemingly endless array of jumper settings, I/O port address parameters and CONFIG.SYS entries can drive a gamer to drink. The creeping incompatibilities introduced over the dozen-odd year evolution of the PC has game designers and game players throwing up their hands in despair.

All of this weeping and lamentation may turn into so much joy if Microsoft can fulfill the three objectives in their WINDOWS 95 battleplan: Plug and Play, Autoplay, and Device Independence. These three concepts, if implemented well by Microsoft and supported by the game publishing community, will drive a sword through the heart of the Configuration Beast. Let's take a look at each.

PLUG AND PLAY

The idea behind Plug and Play is to eliminate the nightmarish hassle of hardware installation and configuration. If you've ever had to play with the dip switches on a new CD-ROM or wrestled with IRQ settings to install a new sound

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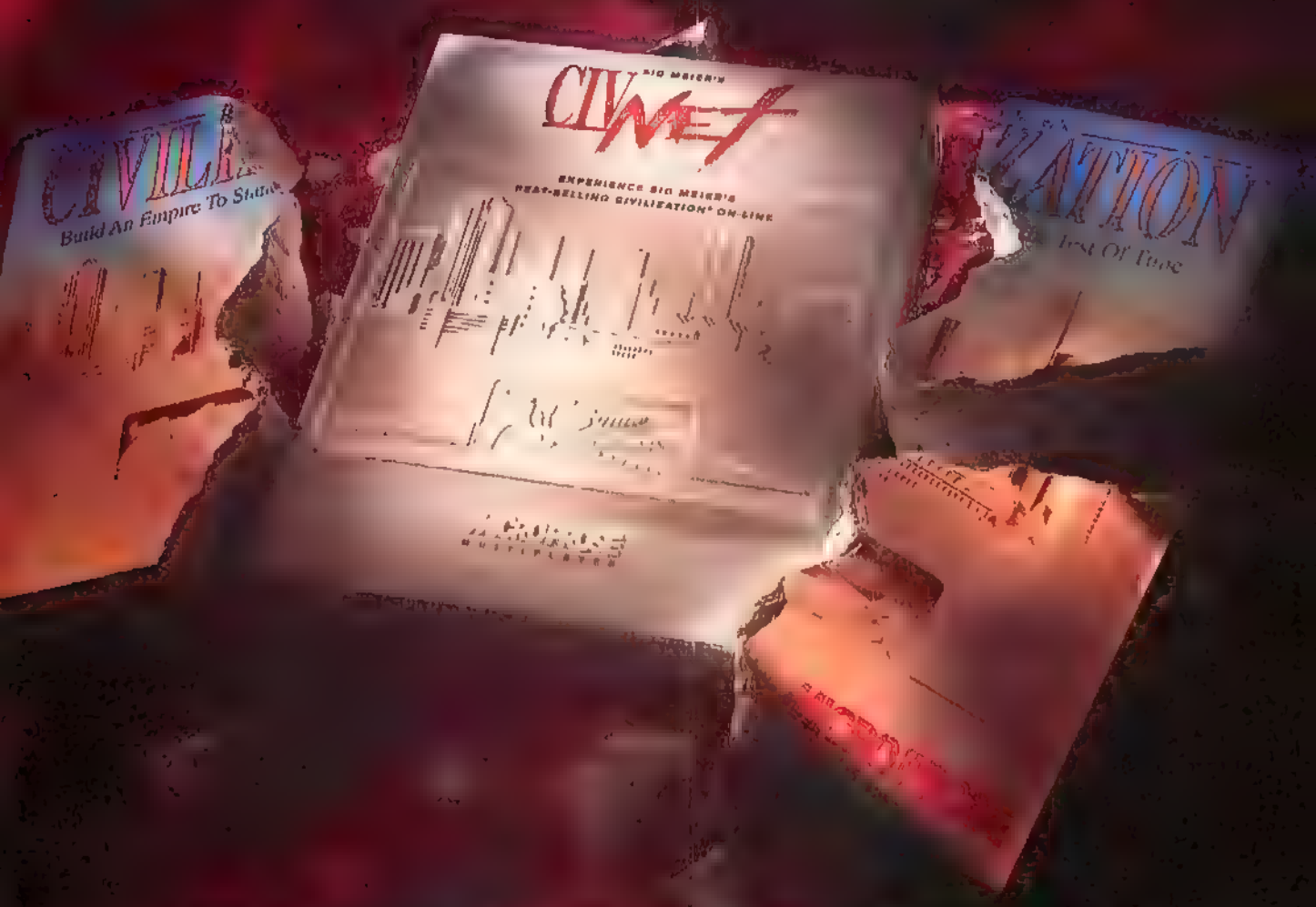

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MICROSOFT GAMES WARRIORS These are the unsung heroes of Windows 95. Alexander St. John, chief guru, and his henchmen Craig Eisler and Eric Engstrom (*left to right*) were instrumental in bringing games to Windows 95.

card, you know the nightmare of which we speak. Windows 95 has been designed so that it will automatically configure itself according to the hardware devices you've got installed in your machine.

To test some of the Plug and Play capabilities, we installed a beta version of Windows 95 on a couple of different systems, with several different hardware configurations. Most of the time the Windows 95 setup program ran without a hitch. The setup program finds *and configures* all the devices in your system. So, if you have a Sound Blaster 16, SCSI card, and a Diamond Stealth video card, the installation procedure will recognize each of these items and configure your system appropriately. If you have a hardware conflict (such as two cards set to the same IRQ), Windows 95 will inform you of the conflict, and often tell you which card is the offender.

The setup program did lock-up on occasion, but when we rebooted and restarted it again, it told us that the previous setup didn't work due to a problem while detecting hardware and it offered to skip that step. After a trouble-free installation, we found our system more or less configured correctly. Configuring specific devices is a snap, too, because it's all point-and-click—no need to add obscure entries to the Windows SYSTEM.INI file. The reason most of the hardware you may have will be automatically configured is because Microsoft has catalogued hundreds of pieces of hardware. But soon, there will be actual plug-and-play hardware in the market. When you install a plug-and-play card, it will essentially inform the system of its requirements. Also, note that a number of PC systems are shipping with plug-and-play functions built into the BIOS. These systems will automatically allocate free IRQs, DMA channels, etc., to plug-and-play enabled hardware when those are installed. In other words, when it comes to installing a new plug-and-play device, you won't have to do much more than insert the device into a bus slot, restart Windows, and click "yes" to automatically configure the new hardware.

> "The PC game market has been suppressed for two major reasons: difficulty with installation and configuration, and lack of significant new hardware innovation for games, because developers have had to code so intimately to the metal that it has become a nightmare to introduce new hardware and get it widely adopted. We're going to bring all of the benefits of device independence to games, and none of the penalties that have discouraged them from using APIs."
>
> —*Alexander St. John, Games Technology Evangelist, Microsoft*

AUTOPLAY

Just as plug-and-play features simplify the hardware installation process, so a feature called Autoplay simplifies software installation. When fully implemented by a CD-ROM title, Autoplay makes game installation as easy as popping a cassette into your VCR. When you insert an Autoplay-enabled disk into the CD player, the game will automatically start to run. A great example of an Autoplay-enabled application is a cute little children's adventure, Freddi Fish and the Case of the Missing Kelp Seeds. Freddi Fish runs under Windows 3.1, but also works very well under Windows 95. When you slip the CD into the drive, a window pops up and asks you if you want to play or quit.

It's a little more complicated than that, actually. Autoplay is a tool that developers can use to enable their programs to automatically install and run when the CD is inserted. There is no requirement for Windows developers to implement Autoplay, but it's such a time and headache saver that most developers are likely to use it. Autoplay can be set up in a variety of ways, all up to the developer. The application can simply run from the CD, as Freddi Fish does under Windows 95. Or, it can install some files on your disk, run the program and then *remove the files automatically when you quit.* These first two methods are examples of "zero footprint programs," meaning that the software leaves no trace of itself behind when it's finished. Another Autoplay option is for a program to launch an install program that installs any needed software and operates in the traditional manner. Note that good programming practice means that the user will have the option of keeping the installation, to avoid a long install every time you sit down to play.

By the way, Autoplay is *not* specific to Windows 95 applications. Most games that will ship in the year or so after Windows 95 appears will still be DOS programs. But it's relatively straightforward to add Autoplay capability to DOS CDs. Both developers and users can still get

SO EASY EVEN A KID COULD DO IT Allright, it's just Freddy Fish, but you'll be hooked when you can insert an Autoplay-enabled CD-ROM and simply click "PLAY." Gaming has never been so easy on the PC.

An F/A-18E Hornet reports.

Hostile troops are on the move.

Your palms sweat.

By morning, they'll stake their claim.

Your heart beats faster.

The enemy is small and crude.

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most of the benefits of easy running and installing without the typical configuration step.

DEVICE INDEPENDENCE

"Device Independence" is a concept that is most important to game developers, but it will have an indirect impact on gamers, too. Currently, one of the biggest headaches for game developers is writing their games to support all of the various hardware brands on the market. For instance, if a game developer wants the cool soundtrack of his game to be heard by the majority of gamers, he must write "drivers" for every popular type of sound card—AdLib, Sound Blaster, Gravis Ultrasound, Pro Audio Spectrum, etc. The same goes for video cards. This is why you must configure your sound card and video card every time you install a game—you're telling the game which hardware peripherals to use.

Under WINDOWS 95, this driver issue will be all but eliminated on the game developer end. Rather than worrying about the specific demands of a piece of hardware, game developers would ideally program their games to a common set of software API's (Applications Programming Interfaces), such as the recently announced Game SDK (Software Developers Kit). So, no matter what kind of sound card, video card, modem or virtual reality headset you are using, the game developer can write to the WINDOWS 95 SDK and be sure that the device will work properly. That, coupled with a far better memory model than DOS ever

The "Legacy" of DOS

Running DOS Games Under WINDOWS 95

One of the most frequently asked questions about Windows 95 is "What will happen to my $4000 library of DOS games when I make the switch?" The answer is "nothing"—you'll be able to play DOS games in Windows, and in fact, you'll have several ways of doing so.

There are three DOS solutions for WINDOWS 95. First, simply create an icon for the game and run it. Second, use the Single Applications Mode or SAM. Third, revert back to a previous version of MS-DOS and deal with the game as if WINDOWS 95 was never installed.

When an icon is created for a game, gamers will have a choice of running in full screen mode or in a window. We've successfully run a number of games in a window, including HERETIC and DOOM, but most game players will want to run DOS games in full screen mode, primarily for performance reasons, and full screen mode will still allow you to switch to a WINDOWS 95 task when necessary.

Many DOS games *won't* run under WINDOWS 95, unless you use the *single applications mode* or SAM. SAM gives the game the full resources of the system—essentially, like running the game from the DOS prompt. The advantage of this operating mode is that you can give each application its own CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT files, creating, in essence, "virtual boot disks." The downside is that when you exit the game, the system essentially reboots. Also, SAM doesn't let you switch to another application while you play.

INDUSTRIAL STRENGTH Windows 95 can handle your dirtiest gaming chores. Switch between either game, and when you're done, fire off a business report without rebooting.

In the worst case, your old version of DOS is just a single keystroke away, and your old CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT files will be readily available. Like OS/2 and WINDOWS NT, WINDOWS 95 gives you the capability to boot to an operating system of your choice. All you need to do is press the function key F4 to get back to good old DOS (we found that a trusty MS-DOS boot disk will work just fine as well).

WHAT ABOUT PERFORMANCE?

The one burning question that we all have relates to performance. How much of a hit will we take when running all of our older DOS games under WINDOWS 95? Like everything else with computers, it depends upon your individual setup. If you have a slow 486 machine with an ISA bus, 4MB of RAM, a slow hard drive, an old video card, and a 2X CD-ROM or less, at the very least, you're going to find yourself running your games in SAM—perhaps even dual-booting back to your old version of MS-DOS. On the other hand, if you have a screaming, full dress 90Mhz plus Pentium with a PCI bus, fast hard drive, a 4X CD-ROM, 16MB of RAM, and a hot-rod video card, you might be running your MS-DOS games in a window on the desktop next to your spreadsheet.

For those in the middle, it will be a compromise. The more resource-intensive games like WING COMMANDER III may run better by reverting back to DOS. We were able to run games like DOOM, HERETIC, DESCENT, and MAGIC CARPET at a speed indistinguishable from running in DOS on a 486/66, just by making a few icons with a few mouse-clicks.

New 32-bit WINDOWS 95 games are around the corner and promise to deliver us from this kludgy state. When they get here, not only will they reward us with their gameplay, but we may see an end to MS-DOS configuration files forever.

had, will make game programming much more streamlined.

The device independence concept will impact several different aspects of games. Let's look at a few.

2D Graphics: Microsoft's move toward device independence started with graphics. Around the middle of 1994, Microsoft began quietly shipping its WinG graphics library. WinG is software that allows developers to move bitmaps around very quickly in WINDOWS 3.1—much faster than the normal WINDOWS graphics functions. There have been a number of applications that use WinG, including WINDOOM, FREDDI FISH, KING'S QUEST VII and JUMP RAVEN.

computer to its knees. Most game developers create their own programming methods for creating a 3D world. This lack of standardization has resulted in a lag time in the acceptance of hardware techniques for accelerating graphics. There are only a bare handful of games that take advantage of 2D hardware accelerators, and there are new 3D accelerators just around the corner.

Microsoft is addressing the acceleration hardware issue in two ways. First, there's 3D-DDI (3D Device Driver Interface), which establishes a standard way for WINDOWS 95 applications to interface with 3D hardware.

WALL-TO-WALL GAME Mindscape's WINDOWS 95 version of WARHAMMER is indistinguishable from an MS-DOS game. And as a WINDOWS 95 game, it can take advantage of hot-rod hardware features currently unavailable to its DOS counterparts.

"Microsoft's WINDOWS 95 Game SDK puts the PC platform in a position to thwart the forthcoming game systems from companies like Sony and Sega."
—Ken Nicholson, Director of Interactive Multimedia, ATI Technologies, Inc.

As it turned out, Microsoft pulled the wool over our eyes, but in a very pleasant way. WinG turned out to be a subset of the graphics system built into WINDOWS 95. The multimedia gurus at Microsoft pulled out some of the key elements of the WINDOWS 95 DIB engine, the operating system software that handles all the graphics in WINDOWS 95 (DIB stands for "device independent bitmap"). They then back-ported these features to WINDOWS 3.1, giving programmers a head start in implementing the fast graphics required by computer games. And it's impressive.

In addition to those games developed on the PC using WinG, Microsoft has demonstrated a game ported from a Sega Genesis console. It's one of those classic, sideways-scrolling shooters, but has multiple actions occurring in the background, in different layers of animation. Using the Game SDK's DirectDraw (the next-generation descendant of WinG), the game plays very nicely at 800x600 resolution with 256 colors on a 486/66.

3D Graphics: Anyone who has ever played a true 3D game on even a moderately fast computer knows how a computer-generated 3D world can bring a

The other method is more significant in the long term. Recently, Microsoft has announced the acquisition of Rendermorphics, the developer of a real-time 3D graphics library called REALITY LAB. REALITY LAB is a true 3D API oriented towards

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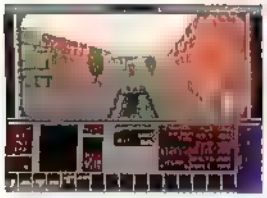

MAKE 3D GAMES!

No Programming!

Stop dreaming about making games, and start doing it!

Interview with the GCS Creator

A. The Pie 3D GCS is an integrated software package for non-programmers. With this system the user can create his or her own 3D games which are comparable to today's top-selling 3D action games.

Q. Is this DOOM?

A. No. DOOM is an excellent game from Id Software (not us). However, with the GCS you can make levels that look very similar to DOOM levels if you want. The Pie 3D engine is similar to Id's in that you can have tall walls, non 90 degree walls, walls with cutouts and ledges, doors, and animated objects. It is different from Id's in that with the Pie 3D engine there are limitations on the floor and ceiling tiled floor textures and steps. Also there are features in the Pie 3D engine like inventory items that can be put down, and two-way passages between any levels, that weren't needed in DOOM. There's lots more, too, but those are the highlights.

Q. [illegible] gameplay?

A. I think the animation is as smooth as our competitor's. In our most complex levels we average 10 to 20 animation frames per second on a lowly 486-33. In a more simple 'maze' type level you would do better.

Q. [illegible] outdoor levels?

A. Why no, outdoor scenarios are easy. You can make buildings and of course trees, tall telephone poles, or almost any simple outdoor object.

Q. What about lighting effects?

A. The GCS can do the standard fade to darkness with distance, or you can have it fade to grey for a very effective fog/rainy day effect. You can also make walls that pulsate or blink with light.

Check out the high resolution wall paper, and walls with windows or any cutout shape. Friendly characters, animated objects, even items like keys that the players can pick up and put down.

Just jump in and let your creativity take over! Don't need to read books or program!

Q. Is there any programming involved?

A. Zero, zip, naught, nada, nothing.

Q. Is this like the Pie 3D Game Creation System?

A. No, although you need to know how to get around using DOS, and edit text files and so on. There is NO PROGRAMMING required, but to do advanced things like creating your own weapons takes some careful study and text file editing.

Q. Can I use my own sounds or other artwork in my GCS games?

A. Yes, just use the included paint program to import GIF, PCX or BMP files.

Q. Yes. The GCS comes with a standard set of weapons, inventory items, and enemy guys. The average user will probably want to stick with those since using them entails just some mouse clicks. The advanced users will want to make (or import) all the images for all the guys with the included paint program. It is actually pretty involved to do that many artwork frames.

Game Creation System

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A unique way to spend hours upon hours creating your own 3D games. Virtual reality corridors to be walked off as created moment by moment.

Use your mouse to build castle mazes, high-tech space stations, or dense forests on a top view grid. Then, add monsters, enemies, keys, & weapons. Click a button and WOW, you are there in your very own 3D world! It's easy!

Now you really go to town! Building your levels. Want a huge [illegible] It is as easy as building [illegible] Just drag it out and set it! Select from the Zoom tools so you can put the view you want. Use the grid and Align tools to help keep your level symmetrically aligned. A full set of editing tools is [illegible]

With the GCS, your time is spent constructing your game, not trying to figure out how to get a game to work.

Create your own sounds & music. Midi & Mod.

SOUNDS & MUSIC

Create your own 3D game worlds with the built-in paint program. Edit existing graphics or create your own.

Create your own 3D game worlds with the built-in paint program. Edit existing graphics or create your own.

Allow you have added your levels, weapons, and maybe put in your own artwork then you are all set to make the final game. One click on this menu choice and a game is created in a target directory on your hard drive. Run your new game yourself, or copy this directory to a floppy disk and send it to your friends, your publisher or upload to a BBS or network as a shareware program or free demo!

Save $$$ from your hobby! Order the Pie 3D GCS today!

GCS FEATURES:

Top view world editor - position walls & objects with your mouse
Full featured paint program - GCS PAINT
Complete manual - Walking demo levels
256 brilliant colors - Custom palette game play screen.
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Special lighting effects - night, fog, pulsating, flickering light.
Outdoor horizon strip capability - mountains, city skylines are possible.
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real-time activities, such as simulation. REALITY LAB would allow game programmers to forego the joy of developing a 3D API, but allows them to get their games written with the knowledge that *every* Windows 95 platform will run their 3D game without problems. There are several third-party 3D APIs, as well.

So, in summary, the upshot of DirectDraw and 3D-DDI: DirectDraw will allow games to take advantage of the 2D acceleration hardware on current Windows-accelerated graphics cards. 3D-DDI will allow 3D games to take advantage of the acceleration potential in the next generation of 3D accelerator cards. Those people who invest in the high-end stuff will see their investment actually bear fruit in WINDOWS 95 games. Games that push the limits of technology now, like NASCAR RACING, U.S.NAVY FIGHTERS, and FLIGHT UNLIMITED, could benefit greatly from this hardware kick-in-the-pants.

Digital Video: For good or bad, the use of digital video is becoming increasingly popular. The technology demands enormous bandwidth and CPU processing power, but Microsoft and Intel have jointly developed a device driver interface known as DCI (Display Control Interface). DCI delivers improved video playback, resulting in a larger, smoother image.

Microsoft will also be adding MPEG support to its current stable of video CODECs (COmpressor-DECompressor—software that allows digital video files to be compressed into relatively small files, then decompressed on the fly during playback).

Music, Sound and Peripherals: One of the most maligned facets of WINDOWS 3.1 is the MIDI mapper. Indeed, it is maligned for good reason. Although the MIDI mapper is designed to set up the patch (sound) set for a MIDI-enabled sound card, the existing MIDI mapper is arcane, poorly documented and, on occasion, unreliable. Microsoft recognized this and really cleaned up this little-used, but important application. In addition, Microsoft is supporting General MIDI in the MIDI mapper, allowing for a more standard approach to MIDI files.

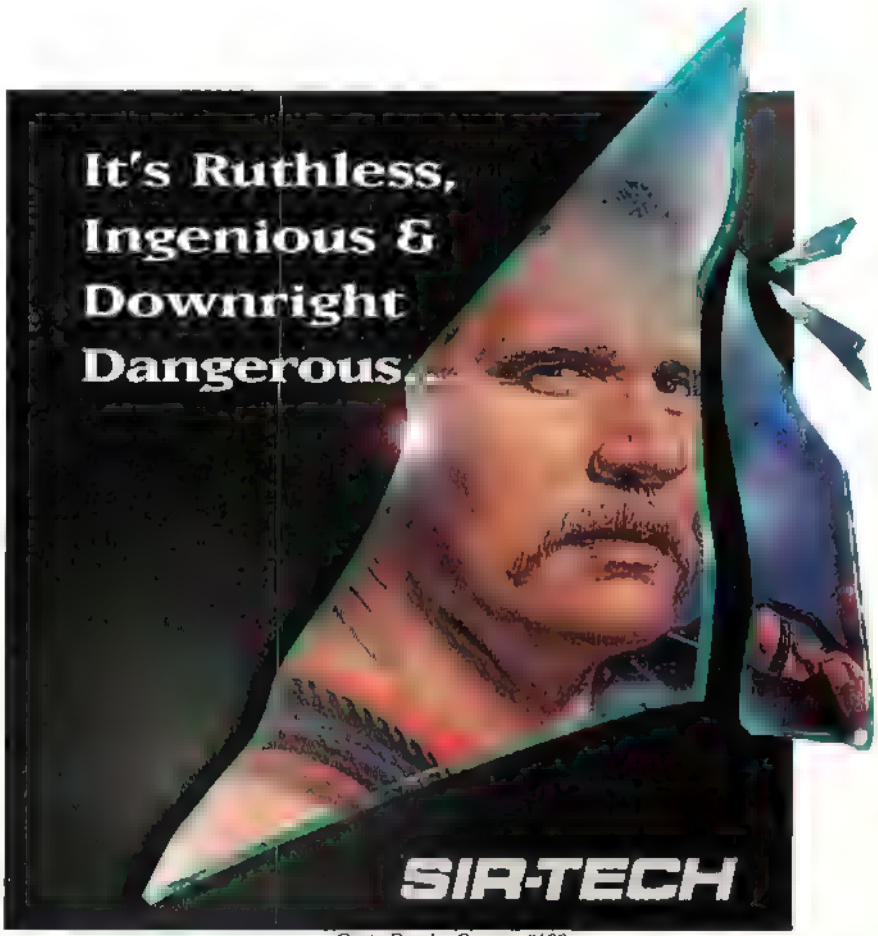
The Game SDK has a low level API called DirectSound that is compatible with the Miles audio drivers used by many game companies. This will make sound easier to program since they are already familiar with the tools. In addition to DirectSound, the Game SDK is tackling the compatibility issues with 3D audio and digital mixing.

ON SCREEN, CAPTAIN This top-secret shot of Origin's PRIVATEER II, still under development, proves that a high-end game can be created as a native WINDOWS 95 application.

> "I think WINDOWS 95 will be the platform on the PC for games and other software, in all respects. This thing will kick OS/2's butt because the game performance will be not just adequate, but considerably better than DOS—in terms of games specifically written for WINDOWS 95."
>
> *—Zach Simpson, Director of Technology, Origin Systems*

NETWORK GAMING & WIN 95

One of the hottest new trends in gaming is the ability to get together with a few of your closest friends and kill them—in a virtual sense, of course. Multiplayer games are beginning to ship on a regular basis.



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"The best thing about WINDOWS 95: compatibility; worst thing: uniformity. In DOS, everything is weird and funky and you get this wonderful divergence of styles. WINDOWS has a natural interface. Constraints drive progress and dynamics. Look at all the WINDOWS multimedia apps—they all look the same. DOS, hand-crafted, lovingly made with artistry...Silicon Graphics, all the same, talking to the same APIs... 'Oh look, a Rendermorphics game; hey, there's a Renderware game.'"

—Seamus Blackley, Producer/Physicist, Looking Glass Technologies

As you might expect, they are a royal headache to configure and keep running. WINDOWS 95 expands on the ease of networking that was built into WINDOWS FOR WORKGROUPS and makes it even easier to set up and use. Also, it's easier for programmers to write to the consistent Windows socket interface. Look for more multiplayer experiences in the future.

Another form of multiplayer, of course, is via the modem, allowing two human players to interact in the virtual world. Modems are not as difficult to set up as networks—but not by much. WINDOWS 95 automates modem setup, making life a lot easier for the dial-up crowd. In addition, Microsoft will be adding a technology called *VoiceView* to WINDOWS 95, allowing two gamers to *talk to each other*, then switch back to playing a game over a modem, all on a single phone line, without hanging up or redialing.

BOONS AND BANES

Of course there are other benefits to WINDOWS 95: better file management, preemptive multitasking, and the recently announced WINDOWS 95 SDK (Software Developers Toolkit) that will aid game developers in producing true WINDOWS 95 games. But these are matters for another day. In our first look at WINDOWS 95 we wanted to draw out the most important issues for gamers.

What are the problems and dangers? Well, of course there's always the possibility that the first version of the software will be buggy. Actually, you can be certain the first release will have *some* flaws—it's just a matter of how many.

Then there's the matter of learning a new interface. Heavy WINDOWS 3.1 users will have to undergo a fairly extensive relearning process. File management and window navigation have been significantly altered, so many of your short-cuts and time-saving methods will no longer work.

Another potential problem involves gameplay in the initial releases of WINDOWS 95 games. Time and time again in this industry, we've seen a strange phenomenon occur when game companies begin incorporating new technologies into their games. Usually, the first wave of new games have a high "chrome" content and mediocre playability. We fervently hope that the game developers have learned from past experience and use this new technology to enhance the gaming experience, and not simply generate titles with cool features and slapdash playability simply to generate early sales. That hurts the industry more than any new operating system could.

As you can see, WINDOWS 95 has incredible potential—for good and bad—but three months before the announced August release, it looks as if the chips will fall on the side of the good. Of course, if things do not shape up the way Microsoft hopes they will, we will have the same kind of muddled confusion that prevails in software today. But if things do happen according to plan, gaming could have its next hot new gaming platform, and we could see the death of the evil tyrants CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT. And will gamer's rejoice on that clear, sunny day?

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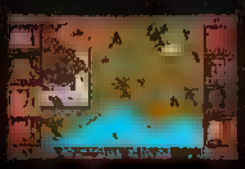

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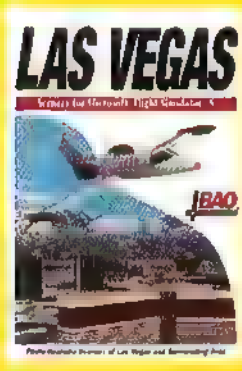

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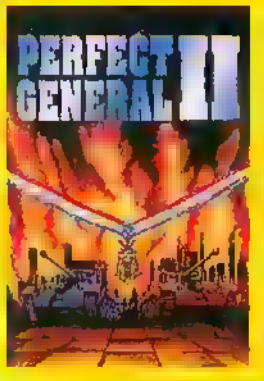

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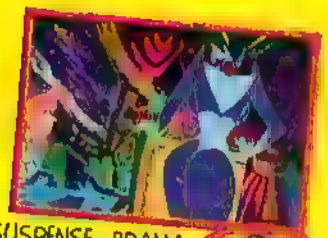

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Scorpia In The Sand

THE QUEEN OF STING LEADS A PARCHED PARTY THROUGH THE DESERT SANDS OF THE STONE PROPHET

by Scorpia

RAVENLOFT: THE STONE PROPHET from SSI and DreamForge follows in the wake of the original RAVENLOFT: WAKE OF THE RAVAGER and spiritual brother MENZOBERRANZAN. While it shares the same title and the same game system with the first game, it isn't exactly a sequel. You can transfer your characters from WAKE OF THE RAVAGER into STONE PROPHET, but there isn't much connection between the games otherwise.

As in the previous games, you create a party of two and fill it out to four by inviting in various characters you meet along the way. I never came across a mage character, so creating one of your own is a must here, preferably a fighter/mage. A cleric is also important to have in the group; fighter/mage and fighter/cleric will get you off to a good start.

Happily, the tedious and overlong character creation of MENZO has been replaced by a quicker system that is structured like a gypsy card- reading session. Cards are dealt on a table, representing gender, race, alignment, class, character stats, face, and name, and you specify your choices by clicking on the appropriate cards. As before, you can re-roll the stats or modify them as you please. There is a wide selection of both male and female faces, so coming up with character appearances you like is not hard.

The game employs the familiar first-person, 3-D graphic system. The first-person view takes up about three-quarters of the screen, with the character bar and game controls along the bottom. Clicking on any character's face brings up the inventory screen for the entire party. Here you equip characters with weapons and armor, look over what you've found so far, switch items among party members, and check on their health and stats, as well as what spells are in effect.

In combat, you can either click on the weapons in hand, or hold the cursor on the target in the 3-D view and click away, which will cause everyone with a ready weapon to strike in turn. Because weapon recovery times vary (a dagger, for instance, will be ready again sooner than a two-handed sword), I preferred to do the cursor sweep most of the time.

While the basic game system is the same as in RAVAGER, several refinements have been made that make life easier. Function keys have been introduced, corresponding to character position from F1 (leftmost) to F4 (rightmost). When you pick up an item, hitting one of these function keys will put the object in that character's inventory if an inventory slot is open.

Fighting with a bow used to be a drag; after every combat, you had to pick up each arrow, go to the inventory screen, and place the arrow in the quiver. No more! Now, using the function key, the arrow is automatically placed in the character's quiver if there is room. Using missile weapons is thus much less of a hassle, and post-combat clean up much, much faster.

The biggest change is in spellcasting during fights. Melee and spells just don't work well in real-time, and finally something has been done about it. When you cast any spell, either mage

RAVENLOFT: THE STONE PROPHET

Price: $69.95
System Requirements: IBM compatible 386/33 or better (486/33 recommended), 4 MB RAM, VGA graphics, 25 MB hard drive space, CD-ROM; supports most major sound cards.
Protection: None
Developer: DreamForge
Publisher: Strategic Simulations, Inc.
Sunnyvale, CA
(800) 601-PLAY

I SEE A HANDSOME ELF IN YOUR FUTURE STONE PROPHET's character creation system uses a card-reading metaphor for determining gender, race, class, alignment, etc.

or cleric, the game pauses while the selection screen is displayed. After your choice has been made, the selection screen disappears and the game continues. So you can get your spells off without trying to coordinate magic and melee while monsters beat on you in the meantime.

Auto-mapping is the same as before. The maps show the party's position, location of nearby items, people, monsters, doors, pits, etc. You can write on the maps, scroll them, look at previous areas you've visited, and print them off on your printer.

The CD version allows you to choose the size of the install you want; I went with the medium (17 megs) installation, and the game performed well. The save games grow in size as you go along, reaching about 800K+ each, so allow an extra 10 megs for that, whichever installation you decide on.

WHAT'S FOR DESERT?

So, what's it all about? Your dynamic duo has been pulled by mysterious magic into Har'Akir, a blistering, desiccated, storm-swept chunk of desert. A handful of miserable villagers huddling in their tents, a few outsiders caught like your party, and legions of unpleasant monsters make up the population. It isn't a cheery place, and your job is to get out of there if you can.

Naturally, the job won't be an easy one (is it ever?). Around this garden of joy stands the Wall of Ra. Touch it and you become an instant grease spot, so just walking away is out of the question. Another method will have to be found, and much of the game is taken up with exploring dungeons in the quest to leave the desert.

Most of the villagers won't be of much assistance. They cower in their tents, looking for convenient scapegoats on whom to blame their misery; outsiders—like your characters—make perfect scapegoats. Expect the majority of the population to be sullen, uncooperative, and ready to heap abuse on you at the first opportunity.

There *are* a few helpful souls around, and you can pull off some good deeds that will at least bring you thanks, if not the open arms of friendship. Being kind in the face of such hostility is not easy, but it is necessary. There will come a time in the game when your actions are judged, and if you fail the test, you're in big trouble. Only by being deemed worthy will you learn of the means to return home.

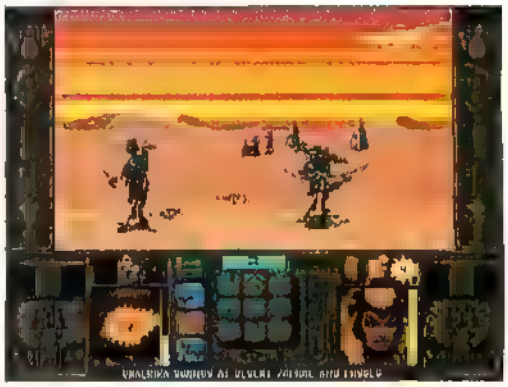
Other than that, there are nine dungeons to poke around in: the Shrine of Neferti, the Obelisk, the Harvest Temple, the Temple of Ra, the Temple of Set, the Royal Burial Hall, The Sphinx, the Burial Catacombs, and Pharoah's Rest. As you may have guessed, STONE PROPHET is heavy on Egyptian motif, which is a nice change of pace from the usual quasi-medieval setting of most role-playing games.

Unlike the previous games, this one isn't quite so linear. You can move around as you wish, and visit most places any time. Dungeons aren't stand-alone, however; most contain some item or items you will need elsewhere. These hellholes are also more complicated than before, with numerous secret buttons, switches, floor plates, and illusionary walls. Working through them will take time, thought, and careful exploration.

The characters available as companions are something a little out of the ordinary this time around: aside from the thief and the ranger/cleric, who are fairly mundane, you can also choose from among an undead paladin, a troll, a jackalwere, and a lion-man (known as a Wemic). A slew of new monsters awaits, as well, including grave elementals, pyre elementals, death's heads, doom guards, fire toads, manscorpions, serpents of Set, and dark nagas, along with the more familiar zombies, shadows, stone golems, and minotaurs.

BRAVE LADY SCORPIA RAN AWAY

In a break with tradition, there is no "showdown with Foozle" at the end of the game. There *is* a Foozle, a malevolent mummy by the name of Anhktepot, but this isn't something you want to get close to; he is quite capable of trashing the party with no effort at all.



DESERT STORM Your characters will clash with dehydrated baddies, like these emaciated desert zombies. The combat system has been improved in many small but significant ways.

Instead, you play "Let's you and him fight while we beat a hasty retreat back home." This is ultimately unsatisfying, as your party leaves just when things are becoming really interesting. Then again, from various hints in the game, it would seem that however matters turn out, life in Har'Akir won't be any better, and possibly a good deal worse, so perhaps advancing to the rear is the best thing to do after all. Still, it seemed like the party was leaving unfinished business behind when it stepped through the portal.

STONE PROPHET ran cleanly, and did not crash once during play. However, I ran into a problem at the Harvest Temple. You make a deal with a cat: she gets you a key, and you unlock a door and fight the vicious monster waiting inside. Sometimes, the room is empty, and if that's the case, it will count against you at judgment time, even though it's no fault

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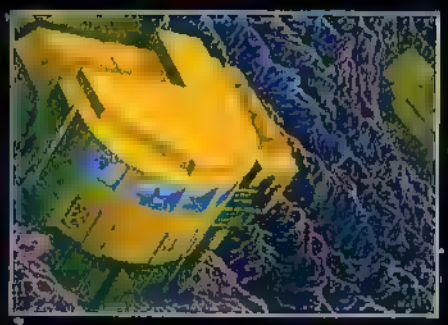

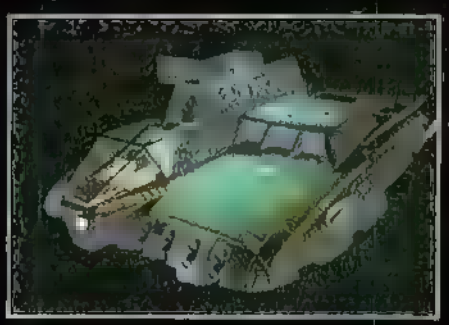

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of your own.

This problem is serious, as you need five points of "good karma" to pass judgment, and each deed is usually worth only one point. There is no way to make up for the cat, except to be sure that you have done at least six other good deeds, since "bad" acts subtract from the total

While the karma points are a nice idea, the implementation is not well thought out. The deeds are of varying difficulty, and some (restoring the Harvest Temple, for instance) should have been worth more. With everything about the same, however, a player could reach this point and be denied entry to the Netherworld solely on the basis of one or two little mistakes. Since this is the only way to learn the location of the Scroll of Return, it is too critical a matter to be left to simple arithmetic.

The Stone Prophet itself—a hieroglyphic mural in the Obelisk—was an annoyance. It holds several clues and hints to the game, and you search through the dungeon for parchments with which to translate the information. Unfortunately, you must do the translation yourself, by hand. Figuring out switch and plate puzzles is an adventurer's job; translations should be the computer's. Once all the parchment pieces are recovered, the contents of the mural ought to be translated automatically.

OH, THE TROUBLES I'VE SEEN The inhabitants of Har'Akir have led rough lives, and even the appearance of your conquering heroes gives them no reason for hope.

There is also a minor bug associated with the troll, who carries less (8 items vs 12) than other characters. At one point, you will be granted a wish; one of the choices is a magical weapon and armor (body armor and helm). If the troll is in the first party position, you will receive only the body armor; the other two items are lost. Should you have the troll with you, and you want the gear, be certain he is in some other position.

Overall, STONE PROPHET is a big step up from the disappointments of MEN-ZOBERRANZAN and WAKE OF THE RAVAGER. The ability to roam freely over the desert and explore is a welcome relief from playing in linear, lockstep fashion. Meaningful interactions with characters are good to see. The change to magic use in combat is a definite plus, as is the addition of those handy function keys. There are still weaknesses, but it does look like DreamForge is getting its act together here, and the series is certainly improving. The next one should really be something to see. In the meantime, STONE PROPHET is a worthy quest, especially in these times when role-playing quests are so few and far between.

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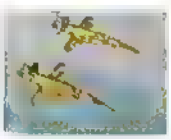

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To Your Adventure Game Needs

So, here we are in the mail room once more, looking over the remains of a rather dismal early Spring. This past six months has been the host of the most severe adventure game drought in years, but it looks like the drought is over. Alone In The Dark III, Discworld, Lost Eden, and Stone Prophet have just arrived as I write this. Perhaps there is some hope for this summer.

I sure hope so, because a day without a game to play is like....well, like a day without a game to play, and the days are getting long enough now as it is. Let's keep our fingers crossed that this is the beginning of a stream of products, and not just a mini-flash flood. In the meantime, let's see what's in the mailbag this month.

Malcolm's Revenge: Those who decided to "walk on the wild side" by choosing Gunther for the end game are having some problems reaching the Isle of Cats. Well, Malcolm decided to be bad, so you can't expect him to go around being nice and freeing people from prison, even if that would make his life easier. No, he's just gonna have to go down the hatch and take a magic carpet ride to find another route to the island.

Wake Of The Ravager: Some gamers are a little lost trying to find the three special artifacts. They can reach the mines easily enough, but where to go after that is another matter. Well, remember those tapestries in the secret room back at Alliance HQ? Those are the gateways you need. Of course, you still have to figure out how to activate them (not to mention, getting one of them repaired), but the means are close at hand

Death Gate: Having a little trouble at the Brotherhood's vault? Maybe you find the hand lock to be not quite so handy to open? It's easier than it seems. First, though, you should open the window and see what's up in the sky. Then refer to your little scrap of paper with the code. While it may not appear to make sense, initially you should see the answer. Especially if you keep in mind that each gem or mineral begins with a different letter.

Return to Zork: Some adventurers are being smashed to a pulp by the Troll king's guards. That is both painful and unnecessary. Of course, you'd do much better in the fighting if you had the proper weapon, properly blessed. I wouldn't trust that blacksmith too much, myself. He doesn't look very bright; just the sort to get things mixed up and not say anything about it. Maybe you should check that out.

Lands of Lore: There's a room in Scotia's lair where you're supposed to drop stuff under neat little signs that read "Weapons," "Armor," and the like. Seems straightforward, but actually it's a little misleading. People put all their gear under the signs and nothing happens. That's because you're supposed to leave only *one* of the type of item requested. Dropping more than that won't do you a bit of good.

Ultima 7—Serpent Isle: Some people have been hesitant about releasing the demon from the sword in the Mountains of Freedom, and look around for another exit. Don't worry about that; letting him (it?) go is the only way to get out, and you need the sword (without demon) for other things later on.

Ultima 7—Forge of Virtue: Forge of Virtue is what I call a "one-question" game, because almost everyone who writes in about it has the same problem, namely finding the Amulet of Truth. The one and only amulet; fakes are a dime a dozen here. So, remember that hood on the floor? Maybe there's something secret nearby you overlooked the first time you went through this place.

Ultima 8—Pagan: Several gamers are having a hard time finding the Tear of Seas. Devon knows where it is, but you can't ask him about it until after you're done with the Sorcerers. There is a book in Malchir's lair that mentions the Tear, and a similar book also appears in Mythran's home at this point in the game. Reading either of those and then talking to Devon will allow you to obtain the Tear.

Jorune—Alien Logic: There isn't really much in the way of puzzles in this game; it's mostly just a matter of going everywhere and exploring all the ruins thoroughly. However, if nothing seems to be happening, if you've been wandering around and the game isn't progressing, then you haven't been going back to visit your Thriddle buddy often enough. He's the key to moving the plot forward, and you won't get very far along without talking to him now and then.

That's it for now. If you need help with an adventure game, you can reach me in the following ways:

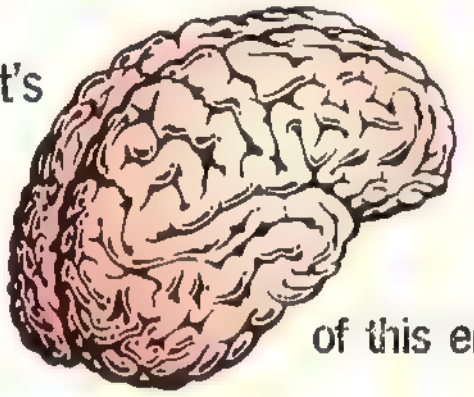
On Delphi: Visit the GameSIG.

On GEnie: Type "Scorpia" to reach the Games RoundTable.

By US Mail (enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you live in the U. S.): Scorpia, PO Box 338, Gracie Station, New York, NY 10028.

Until next time, happy adventuring!

So I'm traveling through this dead guy's brain.

No, not stompin' on mushy gray matter. That'd be sick. I'm cruising this mad scientist's  neuro net as a pulse probe. Poking around for information that could unlock the secrets of this electrolytic underworld. And I'm right on the verge of solving a highly intense puzzle – when my *wife* asks me to take out the garbage. **Bummer.**

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MICROPROSE

Scooby, Scooby Dude

Edward Carnby, Paranormal P.I., Heads To The Wild, Wild West For ALONE IN THE DARK 3

by Jason Kapalka

WHEN AN OBSCURE FRENCH SOFTWARE COMPANY NAMED INFOGRAMES RELEASED THE original ALONE IN THE DARK in 1992, few expected it would become a sleeper hit and minor classic, though in retrospect it seems inevitable. While other adventure games were busy emulating the static rooms and cartoon characters of KING'S QUEST and MANIAC MANSION, ALONE pioneered a sort of interactive movie in which a series of "cameras" offered different perspectives on the player's 1920s-era investigator as he or she uncovered the secrets of a haunted house. Step into a hallway, and suddenly you might be viewing your intrepid ghostbuster from a vertigo-inducing height; descend into a cobwebbed cellar, and the angle might switch to an ant's-eye-view with your surrogate self towering above. Both the investigator and the various beasties walked, pivoted, attacked and perished with smooth, graceful movements. Who cared if the polygon graphics made them look like origami nightmares run amok?

And who cared if the plot was a thin excuse for a mansion stuffed floorboards to rafters with a small army of supernatural terrors, or that the game's claim to be "based on the writing of H.P. Lovecraft" was largely lip service? ALONE was nothing if not a horror film translated to the medium of computer games, and as in horror films, the power of the images took precedence over logic and rationale. So what if no one could figure out what the giant purple tentacled thing in the bathtub actually was? It was *creepy*.

After that, ALONE IN THE DARK 2 came as a bit of a disappointment, being twice as big as the original and half as interesting. Endless fist fights with angular gangsters replaced the elegant puzzles of the original, and ghostly buccaneers took over for tentacled monstrosities. No one could complain that the weird tunneling worm-monster in ALONE didn't really look like a weird tunneling worm-monster, but the more recognizable baddies in ALONE 2 showcased the limits of **I-Motion**'s polygon graphics. At their best, the spectral swashbucklers looked like lurching animatronic models right out of Pirates of the Caribbean; at worst, they just looked like big green clowns.

The latest installment in the series, creatively titled ALONE IN THE DARK 3, holds both good and bad news for longtime fans. The good news is that the combat has been toned down, and adjustable difficulty levels make what fighting there is quite manageable. Unfortunately, the bad news is that almost everything else is, well, pretty bad.

In what could be the most underwhelming intro sequence yet seen in a CD-only game (basically a blank screen with a voice-over), we get the gist of paranormal private investigator Edward Carnby's new adventure: a Hollywood crew filming in the ghost town of Slaughter Gulch has disappeared amidst various allegedly spooky occurrences, and it's up to Carnby to get to the bottom of it. Arriving at the dilapidated Western burg, it doesn't take long for him to realize that this ghost town, heh, well, really *is* a ghost town. That is to say, there really are ghosts: Stetson wearin', six-gun packin', tobacco chawin' gunslinger ghouls, who ain't exactly pleased to see a flesh 'n blood hombre hereabouts...

ALONE IN THE DARK 3

Price: $62.95, CD-ROM
System Requirements: IBM compatible 386/33 or better, 4 MB RAM, VGA graphics, 35 MB hard drive space, CD-ROM, mouse; supports Sound Blaster-compatible sound cards.
Protection: None
Designer: Infogrames
Publisher: I-Motion, Inc.
Santa Monica, CA
(310) 576-1888

SCOOBY SMACKS

It's all about as scary as an episode of "Scooby Doo"—in fact, didn't Shaggy and company run through this plot a couple times? Jed Stone, ALONE 3's chief undead cowpoke, doesn't turn out to be Old Man Withers in a rubber mask, out to scare off the tourists ("My plan would have worked, too, if not for you meddling kids!"), but he and his cohorts still provoke more chuckles than chills. To be fair, the storyline does take a few unfamiliar twists later on, but for sheer silli-

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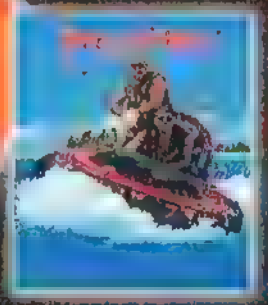

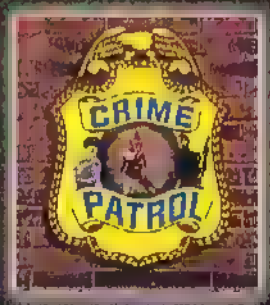

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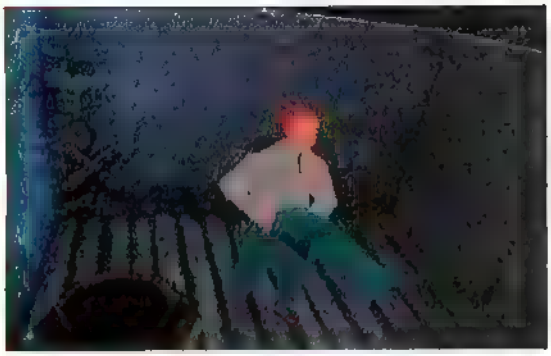


YOU GOT THE BFG9000! Whoops, wrong game. Actually, Carnby has picked up a rare man-portable Gatling Gun, useful for dispatching batallions of undead F-Troopers.

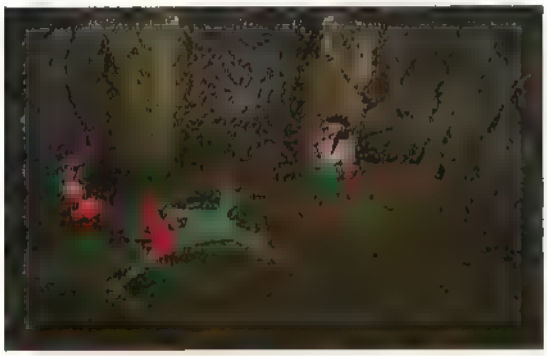
ness they're right up there with any given Hanna-Barbera plot. If you can buy nuclear weapons in the hands of Old West phantoms in 1925, you probably won't blink when Jed shows up for the final showdown in a suit of Battletech-style powered armor. Ancient Indian burial grounds, lycanthropy, voodoo, and Carnby's death and subsequent reincarnation as a cougar get thrown in there somewhere too, and no, they don't make much sense either, but they are at least a kind of relief from the tedium of yet another zombie with a shotgun.

Despite the years since the first ALONE, *numero trois* is essentially identical to the earlier games. A few brief cutscenes pop up, the soundtrack is more elaborate, and voice actors slowly, painfully read aloud any documents you find, but that's about it for enhancements. The polygonal characters are still polygonal, the backgrounds are still pre-rendered pictures, and the "camera" still switches about automatically instead of being controlled by the player. The ALONE engine was ahead of its time when it first came out, but that was then and this is now: games like RELENTLESS, ECSTATICA, and BIOFORGE have taken the basic concept to new levels of sophistication, while I-Motion has been—what?—alone in the dark these last few years?

Of the CD-ROM additions, the musical score is easily the best: credited to one "F Mentzen," it's a collection of eerie Western themes, something like a cross between Ennio Morricone and John Carpenter. Of the voice actors, the less said, the better. They may not put in the worst performances ever in a multimedia game—the competition is pretty stiff—but they are nonetheless excruciating.

SMILE AND SAY "FROMAGE"

ALONE 3 fails to coax any real novelties from its tired engine. The various ghostly gunfighters look like the gangsters from ALONE 2 with the addition of ten-gallon hats, lurching around and blasting at the player like cut-rate robots from *Westworld*. Further along in the game a couple interesting critters show up—a radioactive mutant in sunglasses, a giant spider-man, a headless zombie—but it's a case of too little, too late.



HERE COMES THE SPIDER MAN The spider creature, a member of the cast of polygonal pests, wields a tongue like Gene Simmons could only dream of.

So it's not scary. It's not state-of-the-art. Is it at least a decent Western-style adventure game? Well, pardners, I've saved the worst for last, because the puzzles in ALONE 3 are some of the most wretched I've had the misfortune to stumble across.

By way of illustration, the very first puzzle in the game requires you to plug a token into a saloon's player piano. Not too hard, except for the fact that you can't *see* the token slot. The game simply refuses to display a camera angle where you can get a good look at the piano, and just using the token in the general vicinity elicits no response. You essentially have to infer the existence and location of the thing. I don't know how many players will assume the piano is a nonfunctional object and smack into a brick wall right here, but I only ran across it by blind fluke after several frustrating hours.

The puzzles don't get much better, ranging from the obvious (a rusty lever with an oil can sitting nearby...golly, what to do?) to the dubious (replacing a missing gear with a sheriff's badge) to the cryptic (dumping a bag of scorpions down a shaft to unstick a lever) to completely unfair. At one point, you're required to use a playing card on a gravestone. Why? Because "OE]" is engraved on it. Gamers who've played ALONE 2 *might* recall that the villain there was called One-Eyed Jack, and used playing cards as his trademark, though they'd still have no idea what this Haitian pirate is doing buried in the Mojave desert. Never played ALONE 2? Hey, good luck.

In addition to being aggravating and illogical, many puzzles are also compulsively fussy about the player's position. You usually need to be standing on the exact right pixel to get things to work. I could mention the incredibly annoying jumping sequence, where I died at least 40 times, but why bother?

There are also the odd lockups and crashes, plus a host of minor graphics bugs and one giant whopper that, if encountered, lets Carnby walk on air and prevents you from finishing the game. And then there are the weaknesses left over from the first two games, like the combat, where unpredictable camera angles make hitting targets five feet away with a gun an act of stellar marksmanship, but I'm starting to feel like I'm kicking a dead horse here. It's sad to see a classic reduced so, but the only respectable thing to do with ALONE IN THE DARK 3 is to give it a plot up on Boot Hill.

THE EDITORS SPEAK

ALONE IN THE DARK 3

RATING

PROS Diehard fans of Westerns or the ALONE series might be willing to overlook some of the flaws.

CONS Everything else. Dated graphics, silly plot, terrible voice acting, awful puzzles and an assortment of glitches and bugs.

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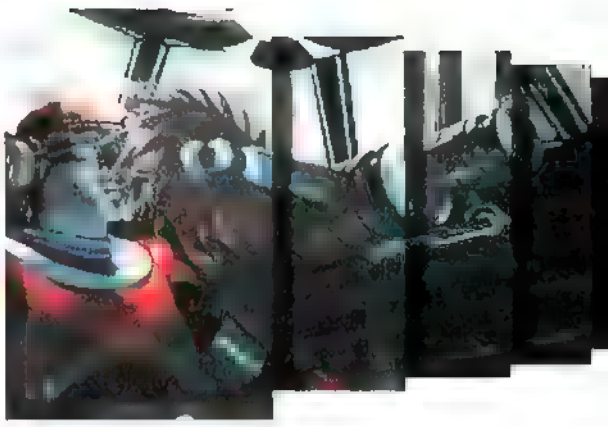
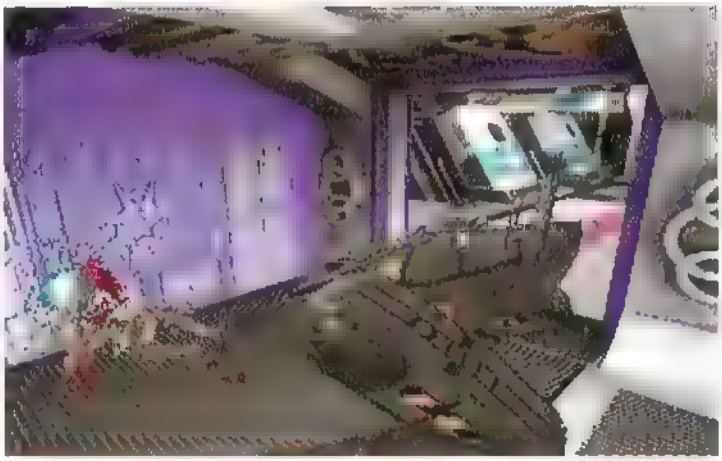


Meat Meets Metal In Origin's "Interactive Movie," BIOFORGE

by Charles Ardai

BIOFORGE WAS ORIGINALLY SUPPOSED TO BE THE FIRST IN ORIGIN'S NEW LINE OF "INTERACTIVE movies," but one thing after another kept pushing back its release. In the end, WING COMMANDER III found its way into stores first. This is just as well, as far as Origin is concerned. WING COMMANDER III is a great game and has widely been heralded as a new benchmark for interactive cinema. Had BIOFORGE been released first, the line would have gotten off to a rockier start.

No one can call BIOFORGE a bad game. It is an accomplished piece of work, as cinematic as you could want, and as interactive too for that matter. With its handsomely rendered 3-D environments and its fully controllable main character, BIOFORGE is a good deal more interactive than WING COMMANDER. It tells a coherent story, drawing on such examples of gothic science fiction as ALIEN, FRANKENSTEIN and THE ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU for inspiration. The games it most resembles, the ALONE IN THE DARK series, have been popular titles.



SAY BYE, 'BORG Staying out of the patrol mechs' line of sight and keeping on the move will help you avoid becoming a crushed can of tomatoes.

But BIOFORGE left me with a sick feeling in my gut when I finished it. I've never played a game that disturbed me as much as this one did. I've been angered, I've been annoyed, but this is the first game I've played that literally turned my stomach.

Is the game's graphic gore to blame? Yes and no. In one scene my character came across another character—the only ally he had found to that point—who was stretched out unanaesthetized on an operating table. His scalp had been peeled back and half his skull cut away, and he desperately implored me to kill him. This scene wouldn't have been nearly as grim and awful if it weren't for the realistic graphics and crisp CD dialogue that caught all the nuances of his agony.

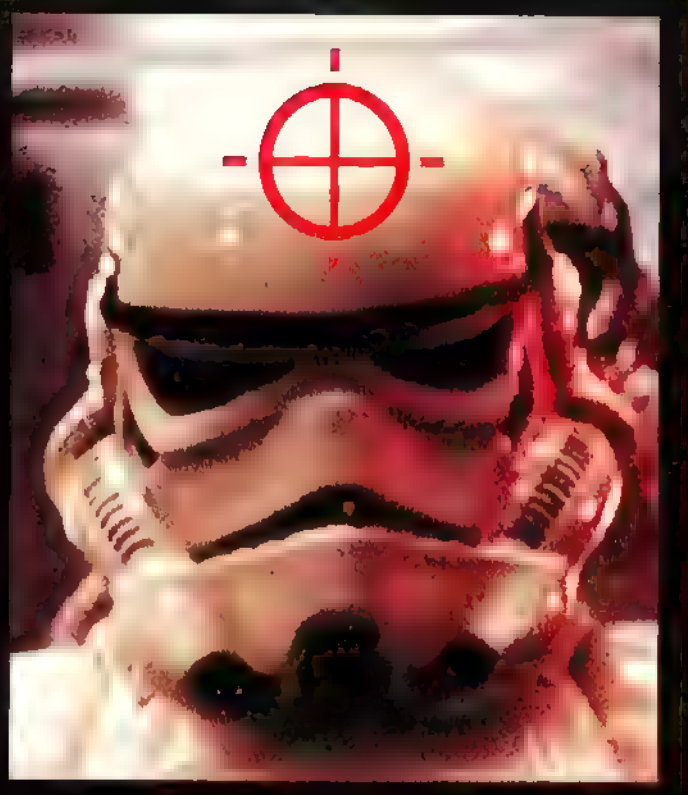
But I think my extremely negative reaction has more to do with the designers' attitudes toward violence than it does with the frank depiction of bloodletting. ALONE IN THE DARK had a giant centipede that swallowed the main character whole, and I loved it. PRINCE OF PERSIA had stakes in it, dozens of stakes on which I kept bloodily impaling myself, and I didn't recoil from that in the slightest. The problem with BIOFORGE, I think, is that for all its over-the-top dialogue and mad scientists with Bela Lugosi accents, it appears to be an attempt to find entertainment value in a kind of cruelty and horror that is not fantastic (or science fictional) at all.

A BUNCH OF CUT-UPS

The tone is set right from the opening scene, where the player's character is

BIOFORGE

Price: $69.95, CD-ROM
System Requirements: IBM compatible 486DX/50 or better, 8MB RAM, 256-color VGA graphics, 5 MB hard drive space (29 MB recommended), CD-ROM; supports AdLib, Sound Blaster, and General MIDI sound cards.
Protection: None
Designer: Ken Demerest
Publisher: Origin Systems Inc.
Austin, TX
(800) 245-4525



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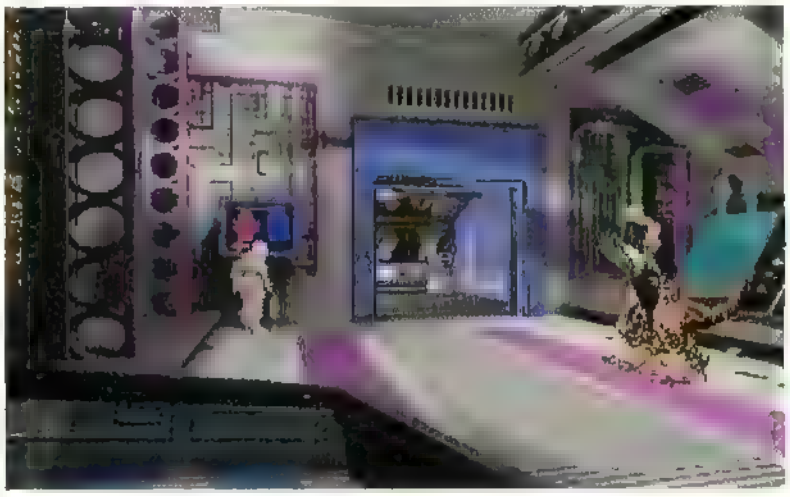
dragged, naked and unconscious, into an operating room, bound to the table, and operated on in a comparably vicious fashion. You see the sequence from the character's point of view: the face of sadistic Dr. Mastaba peers down at you, the huge teeth of his spinning circular saw come closer and closer, and your blood spatters his plastic face shield. Mercifully, you black out at this point. When you awaken, you find yourself imprisoned in two senses. You're trapped in a cell with energy bars holding you in and a robot attendant ready to sedate you at the first sign of motion, and you are also trapped in a strange body, part flesh and part metal. One of your hands has been deformed into a three-pronged metal claw. Your face looks something like Arnold Schwarzenegger's did in *T2* after his skin melted off. You have been the victim not only of torture, you realize, but of some horrific experiment in bionics. To what end? For whose benefit? You have no idea. Your memory has been erased, so you don't even know who you are.



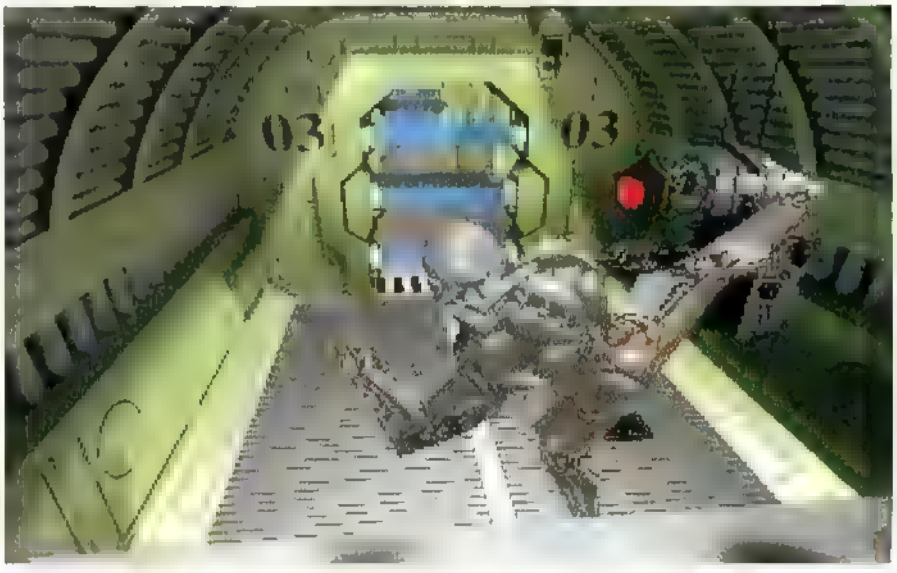
CYBORGASAURUS REX The cyberraptor is one of the more unfriendly mutants in BIOFORGE.

At this point a tremor shakes the room and, if you are wise, you take advantage of the moment to bash the attendant droid into the energy bars, deactivating both. Thus, the stage is set for your escape, and for the rest of the game's plot: you are on a moon that is shaking itself to pieces and you need to get off. You want to find out who you are and you want to take revenge on the people who turned you into a monster. To begin with, though, your primary worry is survival. There are other prisoners in the complex, some more human than you, others less so; most are both violent and insane. Your neighbor in the cell next door, for instance, is so maniacal that he has severed his own arm in an attempt to escape. This is good for you, since his severed arm will come in handy down the line. Like a good little adventure gamer, you pick it up. Then, since his cell contains several other useful items, you enter it and beat him to death, though thankfully not with his own arm.

The combat is carried out STREET FIGHTER-style: the various keys on the numerical keypad, used in combination with "CTRL" and "ALT," correspond to a wide range of kicks, punches, blocks, and head butts. On a slower machine, the fighting has an underwater quality to it: arms and legs drift toward each other in slow-motion. On a fast machine this problem disappears, but you still have your opponent so that your punches actually connect. Many is the time I happily threw what I thought would be the victory punch only to find myself punching the air next to my opponent's head.

Another problem is that since each scene is viewed from different camera angles depending on where in a room you are standing (just like ALONE IN THE DARK), it is possible to move during a fight and fall victim to an unexpected and sudden shift in viewpoint. Apart from the disorientation of the shift, some viewpoints are much worse than others for conducting a fight. Too often, your view is obstructed by a pylon, fence or other object, like your opponent, whom the computer has thoughtlessly placed between you and the "camera." Thankfully the game offers an "Easy" combat mode, which should help get people through the game in spite of such obstacles.

In addition to combat, of which there is plenty, the game offers a certain level of puzzle-solving—nothing comparable to



CANNED MAN Combat looks good and feels fluid, but the sudden shifts in perspective can be a bit disorienting.

others. Since the two opponents can circle around each other, it is not a trivial matter to line up in the same plane as what you would find in an adventure game—but rewarding nonetheless. Most of the situations you find yourself in,

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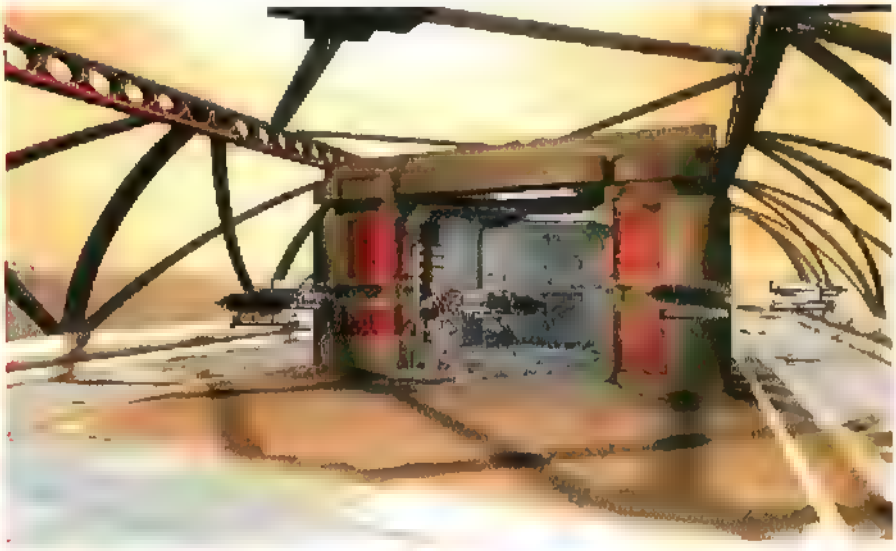
whether combat or puzzle based, are deadly, so it is fortunate that there is a good save function available.

ON A KILLING MOON

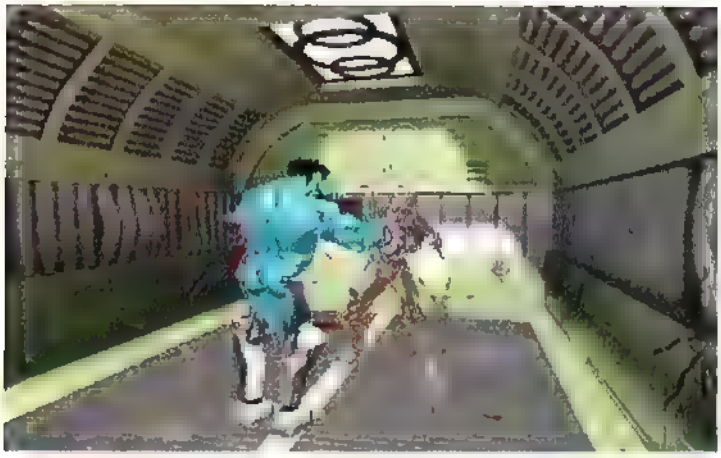
All the way to the end, the game holds the question "Who are you?" over your head. When you finally uncover the truth though, it is a disappointment. Who you turn out to be depends on several choices you've made during the game, mostly whether to let other characters live or die. But none of your possible identities are significant in the slightest, so it's hard to care about the outcome.

In my case, I found out that I was "Popul Marko," a cybernetic limbs expert on Dr. Mastaba's team who had volunteered to be operated on. This revelation could have carried some dramatic weight, but played out way too unemotionally. Even my character said, "Now that I know, I can't say it means all that much." Then he ran down the hall, got into a spaceship, and escaped from the self-destructing moon.

This anti-climactic handling of one of the most important elements of the game's storyline is typical of BIOFORGE, and it ties back in with my initial reaction. I can live with bad dialogue in a computer game; you can have fun with a game that includes lines like, "Eat light, you stupid machine!," "Insolent dog!" and "That was for my men, you grotesque son of a bitch!" We are safely in monster movie territory when Dr. Mastaba purrs, "I need you here to perform...an experiment. Or perhaps 'experiment' is not the right word. I need you for a demonstration." And when your character cries, "You have



DEATH AT GROUND ZERO Getting above ground to breathe the fresh air isn't so hard; you might even be able to admire the gorgeously rendered scenery before you're blasted to smithereens.



MUTANT BLUES This maniacal mutant bears a grudge against the world; fail to take care of him immediately and he'll beat you over the head with his story, as well as his only arm.

stolen my body and my mind; I will know why, or I will have your blood!", you might as well be reading Edgar Rice Burroughs or some other light adventure author.

I also have no problem, in principle, with an interactive movie that tackles painful subject matter in a serious way, though the fact that interactive movies are still basically games at heart makes me worry about what interactive movies based on *All Quiet On the Western Front* or *Schindler's List* would look like. What I can't deal with is a title that clumsily tries to blend the two. You want to deal with prisoners being tortured, fine. But you can't also have your torture victim run up to a big laser cannon, shoot some low-flying spacecraft out of the sky, pull his list down by his side and shout "Yesss!" like Macauley Culkin. You can have your realistic cruelty and you can have your light adventuring—but not in the same game. Otherwise, it appears that you are either suggesting that genuine horrors are legitimately the substance of light entertainment, or else that light entertainment deserves to be treated with the same gravity as genuine horror. Either statement is offensive in the extreme.

BIOFORGE is a gorgeous game, richly detailed and well put together, with some great gameplay and an effectively scary atmosphere. But it is the most offensively gorgeous game I've ever played, and if, in spite of the high rating I have suggested below, no one ever bought a copy, I can't say I'd be at all sorry.

THE EDITORS SPEAK

BIOFORGE

RATING 4 stars

PROS As scary as ALONE IN THE DARK, but better looking and more realistic.

CONS "Realistic" is only good up to a point, and this game crosses the line. Some gamers will find its casual attitude toward cruelty disturbing.

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IBM CD #39208

MACINTOSH TITLES

36011 Absolute Zero CD	38
39398 Alone in the Dark II CD	33
39145 Apache CD	45
36588 Beyond Squad Leader CD	45
38615 Braindead 13 CD	38
36789 Casino Master w/Kit CD	29
36376 Casino Tournament of Champions CD	35
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38569 Club Cyberesque CD	26
33084 Crystal Caliburn	30
39173 Crystal Crazy 1.0	25
38910 Dr Brain III CD	34
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37227 Dungeon Master 2	35
33534 Empire Deluxe	35
38210 Gadget CD	45
39172 Glider Pro 1.0	25
38522 Go Digital Volume I CD	14
35698 Harpoon Classic CD	29
[illegible]	41
3435 Incredible Toons	28
38731 Johnny Mnemonic CD	41
36298 Journeyman Project Turbo CD	40
37022 King's Quest VII CD	49
38966 L Zone CD	40
33353 Lawnmower Man CD	39
33390 Leisure Suit Larry VI	37
35257 Links Pro w/ Harbortown Course	39
35321 Lode Runner	34
[illegible]	44
38570 Ms. Metaverse CD	26
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36736 National Lampoon Blind Date CD	39
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37775 Internet Membership Kit 1.0 WINDOWS	25
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37123 Metamorf 3 D	26
37136 Monty Python's Complete Waste CD	34
38207 NetCruiser Plus	26
36828 Oregon Trail II CD	34
[illegible]	
36538 People vs O.J. Simpson CD	20
34999 Piano Course I w/ Midi Cable	71
36030 Print Shop Deluxe WIN	49
31527 Publisher 2.0 WIN	84
36843 Quicken 4.0 CD	42
36840 Quicken 4.0 WIN	42
36838 Quicken 8.0 DOS	42
36841 Quicken Deluxe 4.0 CD	57
[illegible]	
36017 SAT I Shidyware CD	34
32960 SAT NEW Personal Trainer 2.0	34
36803 Sports Illustrated Swimsuit CD	26
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37887 Star Trek: TNG Screen Saver WINDOWS	30
34170 Star Wars Screen Saver WINDOWS	30
36412 Treasure Pack 1 CD	32
36594 TriplePlayPlus Spanish CD	56
21493 Wintax Pro 4.0 WINDOWS	
35647 Windows 95 4.0	145
35648 Windows 95 Upgrade 4.0	
34081 Windows Upgrade 3.11	53

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37007 3DO Blaster	379
35857 4PLEX Quad speed EXT w/Controller	552
[illegible]	
39265 AMC 2000 Portable Multi Media	445
38051 Aztech Stellar Double X-M Kit	196
35734 Aztech Voyager INT MultiMedia Kit	256

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31141 Diamond 1000 INT 250Mb CD ROM	326
[illegible]	
37031 Digital Schoolhouse INT CDROM	277
39271 Discovery CD16 4X INT CDROM	386
30216 Discovery CD16 INT CDROM	272
30746 Edutainment CD16 INT CDROM	427
21560 Game Blaster CD 16	391
36267 Legend Executive INT Multimedia Kit	302
36826 Legend INT Kit w/6 Titles	238
38060 Multi-Spin 2V Deluxe INT CDROM	300
38062 MultiSpin 2Vi INT CDROM	179
[illegible]	
34923 MultiSpin 4XE EXT CDROM	503
38058 MultiSpin 4Xi INT CDROM	402
38065 MultiSpin 4Xi INT CDROM Kit	479
37028 Multimedia Office INT CD ROM	534
37026 OmniCD 4X	415
31809 OmniCD Upgrade Kit Internal	18
34133 Realmagic CD ROM Kit	646
39272 Sound Blaster Value CD INT	238
38588 TEAC 4X INT CD ROM Kit	196
38586 TEAC 4X INT Multimedia Kit	246
38737 Toshiba EXT QuadSpeed Kit	675
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38554 Lightning 540MB 11MS IDE	226
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37624 ST 31200A INT 1GB Hard Disk	615
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37623 ST 5660A INT 545MB Hard Disk	293
38 60 Trakker 350MB EXT Tape Backup	332
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37035 Aero Mouse	89
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37036 AeroDual 3D (Mouse and Pen)	119
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32883 Cyberman 3D Controller	43
29442 FX2000 Pistol Grip	26
33226 Flight Stand	17
16439 Flight Stick	35
[illegible]	
27914 Flight Stick Pro MAC	70
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37753 Game Zapper	42
24017 GameCard III Automatic	26
24018 GameCard III MCA Automatic	39
38126 GameGun	34
33292 Generation Parallel Game Port	30
[illegible]	
28366 Gravis Eliminator Card	20
27815 Gravis Gamepad IBM	20
30003 Gravis MouseStick II MAC	41
38108 Gravis NHL Hockey '95 Pack	35
35133 Gravis Phoenix Control System	82
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36886 Joyswitch	38
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35458 PC Golf System	121
36876 Pro Pedals	64
30825 Thrustmaster ACM Game Card	27
35 04 Thrustmaster F 16 FLCS	112
38027 Thrustmaster FCS MKII IBM	63
33344 Thrustmaster Formula 1	111
29522 Thrustmaster Pro FCS	12
29863 Thrustmaster Rudder Pedals IBM	104
33804 Thrustmaster Rudder Pedals MAC	101
38156 Thrustmaster TQS for FLCS	112
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31258 Thrustmaster WCS MarkII IBM	101
38950 Trackball PRO	70
38462 Virtual Pilot Pro	70
29434 Virtual Pilot Yoke	60
36656 Wingman Extreme Joystick	43
36655 Wingman Joystick	26
33052 Y Cable for 2 Joysticks	10

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35553 Alphascan 15 15" Monitor	379
[illegible]	
35556 Alphascan 17E 17" Monitor	783
35555 Alphascan 1C 20" Monitor	1096
35557 Alphascan 2E 20" Monitor	1463
35552 Alphascan Plus 14" Monitor	304
38 52 Diamond Pro 14" Monitor	297
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30 53 Diamond Pro 17" Monitor	1066
37863 HL4860 14" SVGA Color Monitor	267
37864 HL5860 15" SVGA Color Monitor	33
37866 HL7602 17" SVGA Color Monitor	760
37861 HN4038P 14" SVGA Color Monitor	224
38390 MultiSync 2V 14" Monitor	33
[illegible]	
38388 MultiSync lens. 2V	52
38386 MultiSync lens. XE15 or XP15	71
38070 MultiSync XE15 15" Monitor	579

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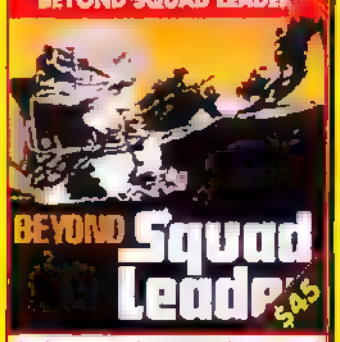

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IBM CD #11573 MAC CD #36588

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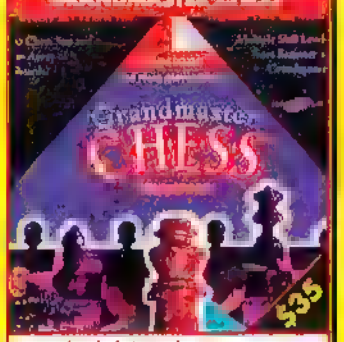

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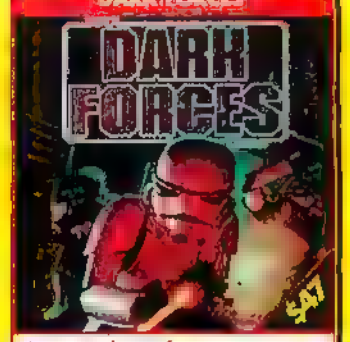
IBM CD #36374 MAC CD #36373

DARK FORCES



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IBM CD # 39144 MAC CD # 39145

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35277 Aztech WaveRider 32 Wavetable	138
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32267 Graves [illegible]	118
39030 Graves UltraSound Ace	84
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3253 Sound Blaster 16 SCSI 2	172
32532 Sound Blaster 16 SCSI 2 ASP	197
34807 Sound Blaster 16 [illegible]	93
37027 Sound Blaster AWE32 Value Ed	226
34661 Sound Blaster Pro Value Ed	74
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36883 Video Blaster FS200 16 Bit	308
36580 Video Blaster RT300 16 Bit	338
3094 WaveBlaster Daughter Board	149

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35343 ACS 52 Shielded Speakers	93
[illegible]	[illegible]
28122 ACS 300 1 Speakers w/Subwoofer	200
36504 Jare J 311 Speakers	59
36500 Jare J 590 Speakers	63
36501 Jazz J 702 Speakers	97
36503 Jazz J 810 Speakers	133
30730 Koss HD 6 MPC Speakers	73
38744 Koss HD 100 Speakers	68
36 73 Koss HD 50 Speakers	33
32220 Labtec CS 900 Speakers	56
32228 Labtec CS 1000 Speakers	48
30475 Partner 570 Speakers	246
30474 Partner 622 Speakers w/ Subwoofer	190
[illegible]	[illegible]
37714 Powered Subwoofer YSTMSW10	137
32101 Roland MA 12CP Powerd Speakers	215
38308 Vivid3D [illegible]	57
37712 Vivid3D Plus	70
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28570 Boca Super VGA	59
36035 Boca VL Bus SuperX 1MB Accel.	106
36036 Boca VL Bus SuperX 2MB Accel.	161
38290 Diamond Speedstar Game Kit ISA	142
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38289 Diamond Stealth Game Kit VLB	177
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35691 Diamond Stealth64 VRAM 4MB PCI	458
35692 Diamond Stealth64 VRAM 4MB VLB	458
29258 Graphics Ultra Pro EISA 2MB	303
29259 Graphics Ultra Pro ISA 2MB	272
[illegible]	[illegible]
36470 Graphics Ultra Pro PCI 2MB	272
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37157 Graphics Xpression 1MB ISA	133
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38276 Cardinal MVP144E 14 4EXT F/M	76
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337 2 Connection 4 4 Int Fax/Modem	77
37974 Connection Pro 9 2INT 14 4fax	90
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36266 Scout 28 8 VFC VFast Fax/Modem	129
32317 SupraFaxModem 14 4 EXT MACINTOSH	178
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32314 SupraFaxModem 14 4 INT v 32bis	110
38528 SupraFaxModem 28 8 v 34EXT	206
38527 SupraFaxModem 28 8 v 34EXT MAC	216
[illegible]	[illegible]
39269 TDK DF1414 PCMCIA 14 4 F/M	138
39267 TDK DF2814 PCMCIA 28 8 F/M	325

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33397 Epson Action Scanning PC	726
39 [illegible] HP Scan [illegible] 3P Scanner	504
39 [illegible] HP Scan [illegible] 3P Scanner	504
38342 HP ScanJet IICX Scanner	991
39109 HP ScanJet IICX Scanner	991
8/48 ScanMaster 35T Slide Scanner	966
[illegible]	[illegible]
35962 ScanMaster IIHR for Flatbed	0 2
35448 ScanMaster ISP Color Flatbed	322
38755 ScanMaster ISPX Color Flatbed	889
38754 ScanMaster IXE Color Flatbed	889
28975 ScanMan 256	142
[illegible]	[illegible]
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MAC #39448

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33683 10 You Anthology Classics	42
39230 [illegible]	41
36093 [illegible]	34
36691 5 Pack 10 Pak Volume II	29
37686 5 Game SuperPak	30
38127 5th Fleet	38
29037 7th Guest	45
31878 AD&D Dark Sun: Wake Ravager	49
34161 AD&D Cobra's Curse	36
34165 AD&D Ravenloft: Strahds Possess	49
38162 Absolute Mayem	13
36009 Absolute Zero	38
38907 Aces Collection	45
36729 Across the Rhine 1944	46
38 84 Advanced C ilization	35
[illegible]	10
35157 Air Warrior II	35
3895 Alone	45
35806 Alien Legacy	38
34914 Alien Logic: Fortune	38
29206 Alien Virus	36
38505 All American College Football 1 0	35
37074 Alone in the Dark II	37
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34857 Ancient Civilizations	54
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35869 Armored Fist	47
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34638 Bioforge Interactive Movie	40
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34279 Cannon Fodder	21
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36375 Casino Tournament of Champions	33
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39096 Celtic Tales: Balor Evil Eye	35
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35420 ChessMaster 4000 Turbo	32
38011 Civilization Network	46
38651 ClockWerx	25
38568 Club Cyberesque	26
36016 Colonization: Sid Meier's	48
33497 Comanche & Mission Disk #1	40
39186 Comanche Multi Player	47
34010 Complete Baseball '94 MPC 1.0	4
37357 Complete Basketball MPC 1.0	41
38673 Conquest of the New World	35
34659 Cowboy Casino	34
38483 Create Your Own Games	26
36884 Creature Shock	48
35274 Crime Patrol 2: Drug Wars	25
34741 Crusader: No Remorse	43
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35716 Cyberspace	40
36913 Cyberia	32
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34973 D Day: Operation Overlord	40
39167 Daedalus Encounter	47
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38831 Depth Dwellers	30
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36320 Doom II: Hell on Earth	45
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35231 Dragon's Lair II: Time Warp	35
382 7 DreamWeb	33
37702 Dungeon Master 2	33
36945 ESPN Baseball Tonight	41
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3538[illegible] Empire Deluxe Masters Edition	26
38161 Epic Tournament Collection	16
37985 Evasive Action Flight Sim MPC 4.0	27
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35769 Fighter Wing	37
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3659 Flight Commander II	39
36696 Flight Sim Toolkit 5 0	26
37980 Flight Sim Japan Scenery 5 0	28
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36698 [illegible] Portland 5 0	31
364[illegible]	
36629 Flight Unlimited	49
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35323 Freddy Pharkas	30
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35312 Front Page Sports: Baseball	26
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[illegible]	37
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33865 Iron Assault	44
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37704 Jewels of Infinity	32
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36047 Jack Nicklaus: Tour Collection	19
36388 Jagged Alliance	46
37895 Jammit	26
34571 Jeopardy	30
37704 Jet Fighter III	46
[illegible]	40
[illegible]	8
[illegible]	18
36852 Kasparov's Gambit	40
34702 King's Quest Anthology	53
35326 King's Quest VII	49
37202 Kingdom of the Far Reaches	37
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35711 Lords of Midnight	46
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38643 Lunar Ass RZ	43
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[illegible]	16
35219 Mad Dog McCree II	34
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34277 Magic Carpet: Hidden Worlds	23
37926 Magic: The Gathering	38
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34865 Metaltech: Earth Siege	45
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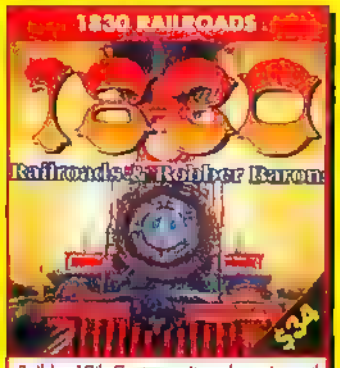

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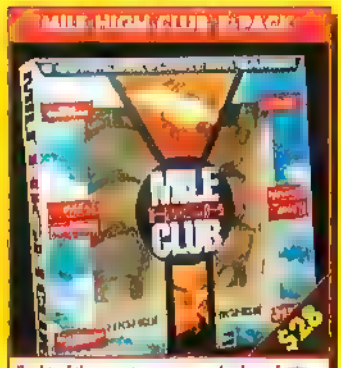

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34698 New Horizons	35
35722 Necropolis	47
36482 Novastorm	26
36364 Operation Body Count	30
38593 Operation Crusader	41
38292 Operation Europe	34
38014 Orion Conspiracy	38
34173 Outpost	42
36280 PGA Tour Golf 486	47
38549 Part in Time	26
37087 Pa[illegible] Air War 1942	46
36481 Peace[illegible]	17
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36980 Peter Gabriel - Xplora	44
34085 Pharaoh's Legacy	53
3694[illegible] Phoenix Fighter	45
35005 Pinball Arcade	
39410 Pinball Fantasies Deluxe	30
3775[illegible] Plague Dead Windows	24
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32791 Police Quest IV	42
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36244 Power Hits	41
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36385 Realms of Arkania Star Trail	46
32155 Rebel Assault	48
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3573[illegible] SimFarm	30
[illegible]	
37593 SimTower	32
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38627 Simon the Sorcerer	30
39396 Sins of Big Horn	35
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39362 Sky Warriors	38
38988 Slam City	46
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35224 Space A[illegible]	20
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36701 Warcraft: Orcs and Humans	40
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39642 Wave[illegible]	30
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35300 Wing Commander Armada MPC	40

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38[illegible] W[illegible] & Splashdown	30
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30897 Day of the Tentacle Maniac II	34
37078 Descent	35
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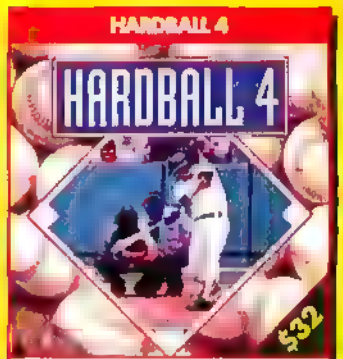

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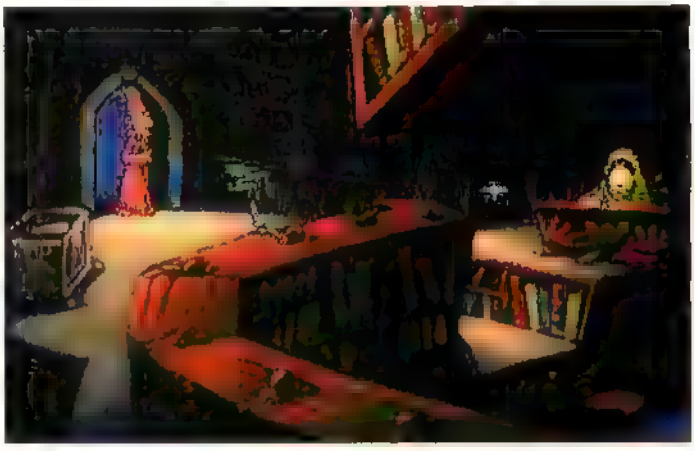
Dying Is Easy, Comedy Is Hard

Psygnosis' Pythonesque Portrayal Of Pratchett's DISCWORLD

by Charles Ardai

HUMOR IS A FUNNY THING. EVERYONE LOVES A COMEDIAN, BUT IT'S THE SIMPLEST THING IN THE world for even a great comedian to overstay his welcome. Read one of Dave Barry's brilliant newspaper columns and you'll find yourself dissolving into gibbering paroxysms of laughter, but try to read a collection of his columns back to back, and by the twentieth you'll be lucky if you can work up a decent chuckle. Try watching a dozen stand-up comedians in a row, and you get the same result.

Now, Terry Pratchett is a genuinely funny writer, author of many a laugh-out-loud passage in his twenty-some-odd novels, most of which are about a fantasy universe called "Discworld." He's almost as funny as his countryman and spiritual kinsman, Douglas Adams, and a good deal funnier than such peers as Piers Anthony, Craig Shaw Gardner, Robert Asprin and Esther Friesner. Still, I defy anyone above the age of 14 (the last year, by law, that a person is permitted to believe that the highest form of comedy is the pun) to read even one of these books cover to cover, much less the whole series front to back. Yes, it's all very funny, but only taken in small doses. You reach a point, usually around page 93 out of 300, where you finally say, "Enough already."



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DISCWORLD

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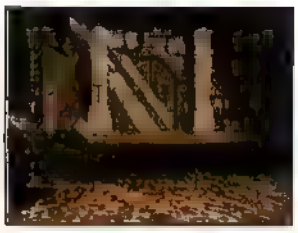
System Requirements: IBM compatible 386 or better, 4MB RAM, 256-color VGA graphics, 3 MB hard drive space, CD ROM; supports AdLib, Sound Blaster, and Genera | M | DI sound cards.
Protection: None
Developer: Perfect 10 Productions
Publisher: Psygnosis, Ltd.
Cambridge, MA
(617) 497-5457

For those Pratchett fans who have not yet reached that point, **Psygnosis'** new DISCWORLD adventure game will be manna from heaven. Players new to this cockeyed universe will enjoy the game, too, but only until somewhere around the end of Act Two, at which point, their appetites for silliness sated, they are likely to join me and other *Discworld* refugees in the "Enough already" brigade.

COMPACT DISCWORLD

There are two premises underlying the *Discworld* books: first, that a small, pizza-shaped world balanced on the back of a giant space turtle might somehow spawn life of a distinctly Tolkienesque cast, which is to say life of the witch, wizard, troll, dragon, king, castle, and quest variety; and second, that since phrases like "giant space turtle" and "pizza-shaped world" are worth a chortle in and of themselves, a book filled with the like ought to be a bestseller. I don't mean to say that either premise is erroneous; the only question is how well they transfer to the world of computer games.

DISCWORLD works nicely as a **Sierra-**



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style adventure game, which is to say one in which your job is to maneuver a little character around one screen after another, dealing with a wide range of other characters and puzzles as they cross your path. This is not entirely unlike what happens in the books: characters pop up and say funny things, obstacles arise and are overcome, and a ramshackle plot somehow assembles itself out of all the zaniness.

The pleasures the game offers can be divided into two varieties. From a gaming perspective, half the fun is the fun of discovery: new areas on the map of DISCWORLD open up as you proceed, giving you a chance to visit everywhere from the back alleys of pestilent Ankh-Morpork to the Palace of the Patrician. The other half of the fun comes from the chance to demonstrate your cleverness by teasing out the solutions to some tough little puzzles: how to get a pancake-flipping cook to leave his kitchen, how to get a monk to take his robe off so you can wear it, how to unsummon a dragon by summoning astral custard instead, and so on. These pleasures are typical of adventure games more than novels, and the designers make sure to load DISCWORLD up with plenty of game-worthy events and challenges.

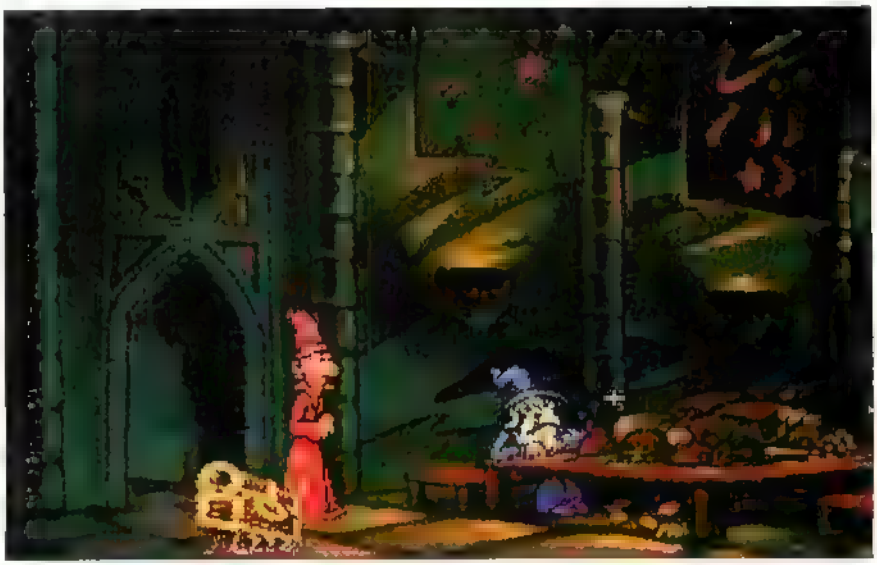
The remaining half of the fun, however, is very much derived from the novels. It rests in author Gregg Barnett's convincingly Pratchett-like wordplay and banter, as performed on CD-ROM by well-chosen voice actors that include Monty Python's Eric Idle and *Doctor Who*'s Jon Pertwee. (By the way, if you think three halves is one-third more fun than anyone can logically have, you obviously haven't spent enough time summoning astral custard on the back of a giant space turtle.) Lines both witty and groan-inducing zing back and forth like ricocheting bullets. It's a little like watching a *Discworld* cartoon, and not a bad one at all.

However, this cartoon-like effect is part of what finally does *Discworld* in: the game sinks under the weight of its abundant non-interactive gags. There's just too much there, and too little of it is under your control. In most encounters, you get to choose from a menu of icons that determine the tone your character, the bumbling-but-lovable wizard Rincewind, will take in conversation. Unfortunately, this leaves you in the unenviable position of being the passive straight-man to all of DISCWORLD's loonies.

"Is this fish fresh?" Rincewind asks a portly fishmonger, and you can almost hear the burlesque-house orchestra tuning up in the background. "Fresh? Fresh? It just made a pass at my wife, sir!" (Pause for rim shot.) And you'll be pleased to know that the old fishmonger is only warming up. Try being sarcastic, angry, querulous—each mouse click launches a flood of one-liners and rejoinders, the majority of which are quite funny, but over which you exert no influence. After a while, you stop laughing and start tapping your fingers instead.

For example, early in the game I want to walk into a bar. Instead, the bouncer corners me, Ancient Mariner-like, and launches into his life story. A minute passes, two minutes, and he's still talking. Okay, okay, I want to say, you live to thump people on the head. Can I go in now?

Later, a buxom barbarian maiden has a long spiel to spill as I pass her in the street. A bunch of old coots in the town square do a vaudeville routine about how Rincewind doesn't look like the adventure heroes they knew in the good old days. Everyone makes fun of Rincewind because his wizard's robes look like a dress. Running gags abound, and boy, do they keep running. Enough already!



DRAGON-HUNTING WE WILL GO Backed by his trusty magic luggage, Rincewind braves a barrage of puns to get the dirt on a dragon.

SLIPPED DISCS

This is not to say that you have nothing to do other than listen to jokes. You must also solve the game's puzzles, the bulk of which have to do with a dragon that is terrorizing the people of *Discworld* and with the black-hooded coven responsible for summoning it. First, Rincewind has to gather the pieces of a dragon-locating machine—that's Act One. Act Two finds Rincewind infiltrating the coven to steal six golden talismans from its members. The dragon returns in Act Three, and it is determined that the hero who slays it will have million-to-one odds against him. Thus, Rincewind's task is to manipulate matters so that his odds of success are *exactly* a million-to-one. The final showdown with the dragon makes up Act Four.

To spice things up, there is time travel involved (Rincewind gets to test the hypothesis that the fluttering of a butterfly's wings in the past can cause climatological changes in the future), plus a bogeyman who is afraid to come out of hiding, a lusty witch who's after Rincewind for a kiss, a prune-eating wizard and another wizard who is deaf (oh, the fun to be had with those two!), a Sword That Goes Ting, and a climactic pie fight.

By and large these puzzles are stronger than is typical for adventure games these days, and as long as the designers stick to

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Balor of the Evil Eye

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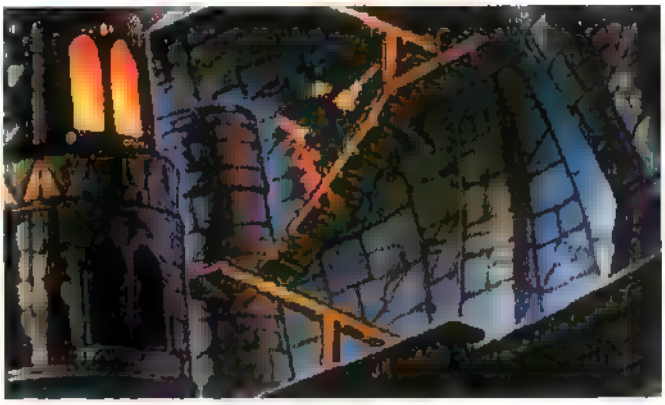
puzzles, they do fine (though a few puzzles allow the player to back himself into a dead end or have similar design flaws). When the designers switch modes, they do well with the joke-telling, too.

However, the joint between the two modes is weak. The game's pacing is awkward and the balance is off. Since your mind is on the puzzles, you don't appreciate the comedy nearly as much as you would if it weren't standing in the way of your reaching your objective—for instance, if this really were a cartoon. At the same time, the puzzles also get in the way of the jokes. So, despite the fact that DISCWORLD contains some of the better puzzles and some of the better jokes I've seen in a long time, the overall impression the game conveys is not one of richness but one of clutter and surfeit. Of course, too much is better than too little: if you start playing DISCWORLD and stop enjoying it halfway through, it's easy enough to Save and Quit. A few weeks later it might seem fresh again.



I'LL WALK, THANK YOU Rincewind would rather walk than hitch a ride with a tempestuous enchanted broom.

DISCWORLD has some moments of unique and inspired whimsy in it—it's easily the funniest game I've played since LUCASARTS' DAY OF THE TENTACLE and SIERRA'S FREDDY PHARKAS, FRONTIER PHARMACIST—but too often it feels familiar and overdone. The novels share this weakness: you get to a point where you say, "I've read all this before," and basically, you're right.

In the end, DISCWORLD is a double helping of a meal we've all eaten too many times, a juicy Roast of Middle Earth with a helping of corn on the side. It's cooked up well and the first few mouthfuls are tasty, but after a while it's hard to work up enough of an appetite to finish what's on your plate.

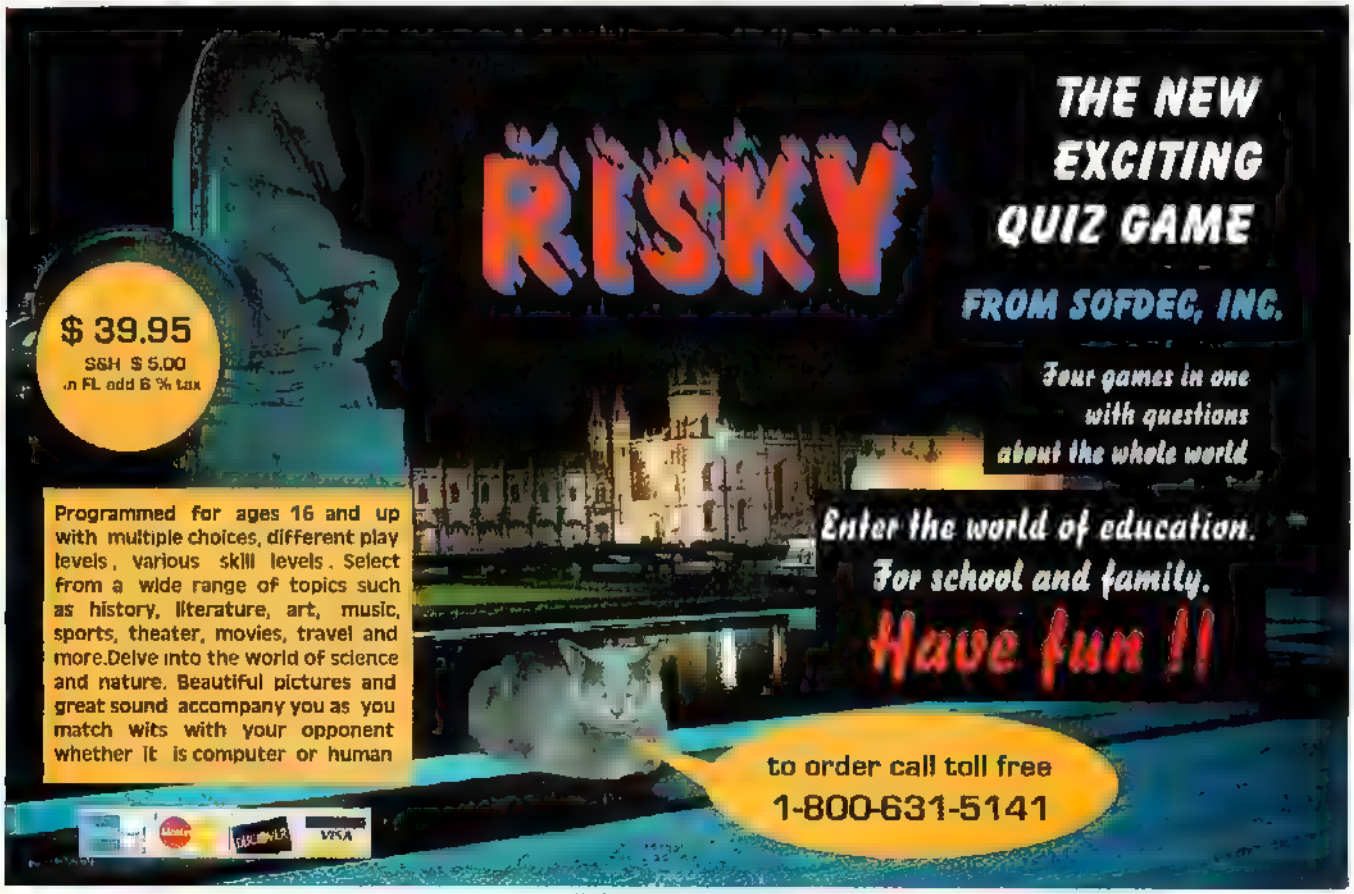
THE EDITORS SPEAK

DISCWORLD

RATING 3.5

PROS Very funny writing that catches Pratchett's tone perfectly and blends in plenty of first-rate puzzles.

CONS It's hard to find new jokes to tell about a fledgling wizard hunting a terrible dragon, and the ones they tell, though not terrible, do drag on.



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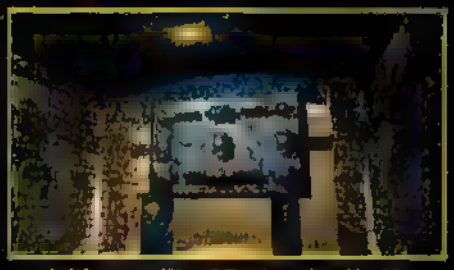

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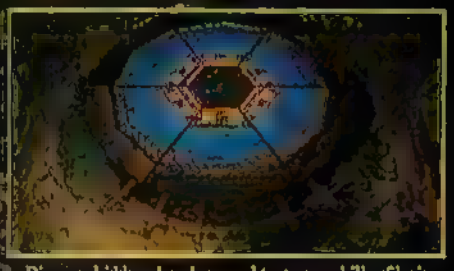

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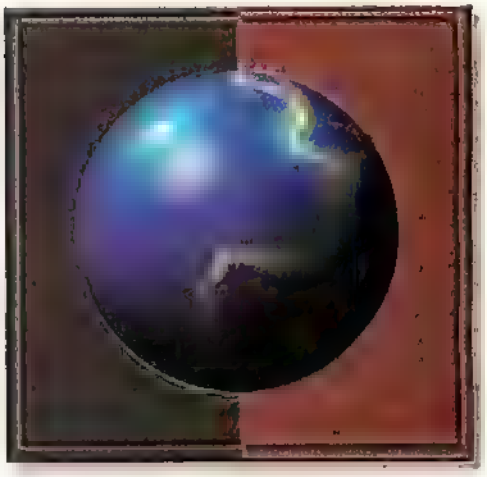


DESCENT's Dizzying 360 Degrees Of Freedom Takes 3D Action Games To The Next Level

by Vox Day

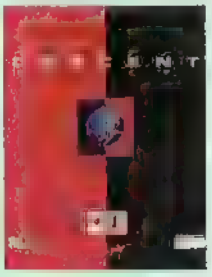
I see the edge, I look I fall
The further I see, the further I fall
Deeper and deeper
—The Fixx

IN THE PAST SIX MONTHS WE HAVE WITNESSED A DELUGE OF 3D ACTION TITLES, EACH COMPARING ITSELF IN ONE way or another to the quintessential 3D action game, DOOM. But none has really made a serious attempt to surpass DOOM and take the sub-genre to its next evolutionary step. None, that is, except for **Interplay**'s DESCENT.

One of the best indications that a game is going to be a big hit is the buzz that invariably begins to spread across the networks and into office conversations whenever something truly exciting appears. Last January at the Winter Consumer Electronics Show I was surprised to hear that the vast majority of gamers with access to networks were not playing HERETIC or DOOM II, but the newly-released shareware version of DESCENT.

But once I tried it out myself, the reason for all the hyper-positive word-of-mouth seemed pretty clear. DESCENT cannot be dismissed as just another DOOM clone. Instead, it offers the first look at what the next generation of 3D action titles will be like—which, if DESCENT is any indication, is going to be a bunch of very good, very exciting games.

DESCENT



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RSAC Rating: 1 (Violence to realistic objects)
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Publisher: Interplay Productions
Irvine, CA
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THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF DESCENT

Most games that are described as "3D," like WOLFENSTEIN 3D and DOOM, are in fact "two-and-a-half D." While the virtual game universe appears to have three dimensions, the objects in the universe have only two dimensions, fooling the eye into thinking they have depth by a series of rapid image switches. A typical limitation of the two-and-half D game is that the movement of the player within the universe is usually limited to six basic angles: forward, backward, right, left, up, and down.

MIND YOUR 3'S & D'S Unlike DOOM, DESCENT's environment is truly three-dimensional, so objects like this multiplayer opponent have a true appearance of depth.

However, DESCENT allows a full 360 degrees of movement. Instead of only moving straight forward, back, right, left, and up-and-down, you can move any direction that you happen to be pointing. This is very important in DESCENT, because the game's virtual universe also allows for completely arbitrary texture-mapping, which means that the maze can handle gradual slopes and curves. This is also

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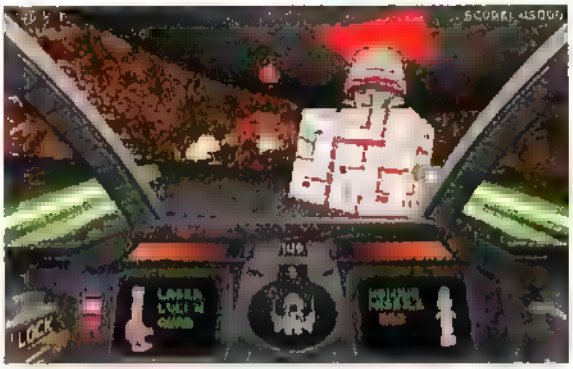
why a joystick is key to playing DESCENT; you can't get away with just using the keyboard anymore. Along with all this freedom of movement comes complexity, though, so you'll quickly learn that it is much easier to get hopelessly lost in a DESCENT mine than in any other PC game maze. Many times, you really won't know which way is up!

POT SHOTS AT HOT 'BOTS

DESCENT takes place in a future where the Post Terran Mining Corporation has established mining operations across the Solar System. But a hostile force, presumably alien, has taken over the mines and now controls the mining operations, as well as the robots that were originally intended for defending the mines from attack. In order to keep the mines out of enemy hands, you, the PTMC's hired gun, are directed to infiltrate the mines in an armed, one-man flyer, with orders to destroy each mine by blowing up its central fusion reactor. The catch is that once the reactor is blown, you've got less than a minute to find the only exit before the whole place evaporates in a subterranean mushroom cloud.



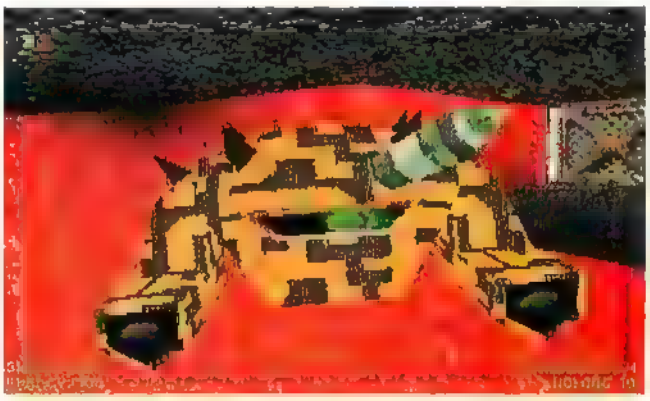
LET'S BLOW THIS JOINT! The object of your descent is to find the reactor core and set off a nuclear explosion. You then have one minute to get out or get fried.

Destruction of the mines is your primary objective. But you also have a secondary objective of rescuing any humans you happen to encounter stranded within the mines. Fortunately, if unrealistically, you can carry as many "hostages" as you need without losing any performance from your flyer.

WHAT, NO SHOTGUN?

Your flyer's armaments pack a serious punch, with five different weapons, four different missile types, and a rear-mounted bomb dropper. Although each weapons has its different strength, you're just as well off sticking with your initial weapon—the laser cannons. Once you've found a quad-laser rack to add on and charged it up to its maximum rating of four, you'll have a great weapon that fires quickly and does heavy damage. The Spreadfire cannon is pretty useless, but the Vulcan fires a machine-gun burst that makes it a solid standby as long as you have the ammo for it. The Plasma and Fusion guns are very powerful, but suck up way too much energy and fire too slowly to use as your primary weapon.

The missiles are pretty self-explanatory, but you should make sure to save your homing missiles for when you really need them. The Proximity Bombs, which are ejected from behind your flyer, are primarily useful for playing in one of the competitive multiplayer modes. They make it very dangerous to pursue an enemy, particularly one that seems to be fleeing blindly. Of course, they also make a good surprise for more aggressive robots who just won't give up the chase.



UH, RUN? This lumbering lummox wants to force feed you a projectile sandwich. We recommend you try the quiche instead.

The robot enemies, while nowhere near as gut-wrenchingly intimidating as the warped and twisted creatures of the DOOM universe, make effective and deadly opponents. They are true 3D objects, and like you, have 360 degrees of movement. This means that they can and will come at you from all angles! Since they have varying degrees of intelligence, aggressiveness, and firepower, you'll be forced to vary your tactics. While the more lightly armed droids of the earlier levels move fairly slowly and fire slow-moving projectiles, the enemy robots of later levels are armored better, move faster, and use far more deadly weapons.

Like many good games before it, DESCENT has that one "impossible" level. It *is* possible to defeat the giant, teleporting, homing-missile armed, plasma-gun firing Hulk at the end of level 7 without cheating—it's just really, really hard. Fortunately, the levels that follow level 7 aren't as bad. I remember thinking, "My God, there's 20 more levels! Didn't they playtest this thing?"

MULTIPLAYER MAYHEM

DARK FORCES notwithstanding, it's unthinkable for a 3D action game to come out now without supporting some sort of multiplayer mode, either via modem or network. And it's in multiplayer mode where DESCENT really shines. Up to eight players can play in a network game, and no dedicated server is required. There are options for all-against-all, teams, and cooperative play, and Interplay has even designed a couple of levels specifically for multiplayer mode. The best feature of the net play, though, is the ability to join the game at any time. This way people can hop into a game in progress without making everyone else quit and start over. It's also worth noting that there can be up to three games going on a network at once.

While modem play only supports two players, it is a very solid interface that is much easier to connect with than the modem setup for DOOM and HERETIC. Not once have I had a problem getting DESCENT going over the modem, even playing long-distance with gamers from around the country.

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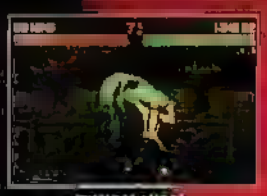

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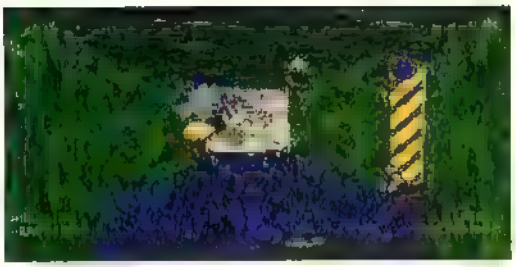
DESCENT also stands apart from other 3D multiplayer action games in that it is the only one that can be more fun to play cooperatively than competitively. Not that it isn't a blast when you've got six to eight players going in an Anarchy showdown; in fact, when you've got that many people involved, it's virtually impossible to play totally cooperatively. But when you've only got two or three players, it's often more fun to go in and try to blow the reactor together than just going for one another's throats. The mines are so big that you simply don't run into the other players very often, and with the complexity of the 3D structures, it's much harder to always know where you are and where that quad laser is hidden. But also, the sense of mission that pervades DESCENT creates a team spirit that is lacking from most other 3D multiplayer affairs. You'll often see people splitting up responsibility for carrying the hostages, so that some of them will be saved in case one flyer doesn't escape.



DAY GOES NITE-NITE The author goes looking for trouble in multiplayer combat and finds more than he can handle.

The highest point of DESCENT is always the 30 seconds of sheer panic that occurs once a reactor is destroyed. The sirens begin to wail, the lights start flashing, and your vision goes dark as your pulse speeds up to 160 bpm. Even though you've memorized the path to the exit, the stress of the moment often causes you to forget which way to go. "Where's that red door?!" "I thought YOU knew where it was!" And once you do get out successfully, there's a hugely palpable sense of relief. After a particularly harrowing last-second escape one night, someone shouted, "Group hug, everybody!" The laughter had an edge of hysteria to it, I thought. Sign of a good game.

DESCENT isn't perfect. The sequence of events can get monotonous after a while: get the blue key, get the yellow key, get the red key, blow the core, get out. But it is a game that you'll find yourself booting up time and time again. I suspect DESCENT will get old as a solo game long before network players tire of it. But besides providing pulse-pounding entertainment for an amazingly low retail price, DESCENT points the way to the future of true 3D gaming, and for that reason alone it's one game that shouldn't be missed.

THE EDITORS SPEAK

DESCENT

RATING

PROS An amazing 3-D environment with 360 degrees of motion. The multiplayer options are some of the best in action gaming.

CONS The level goals are rigid, so the single-player game becomes monotonous after a while.

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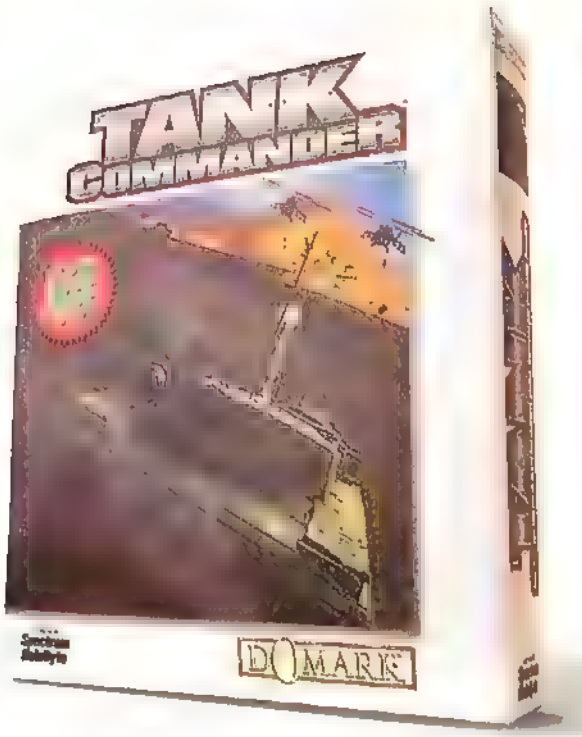
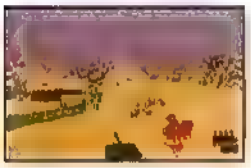


HARD NOT TO PLAY.



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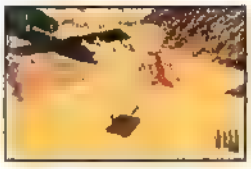

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Take A Walk-Thru On The Dark Side

Top Secret Mission Strategies For LucasArts' DARK FORCES

by Jason Kapalka

::begin transmission::
::begin report::
SEND: Deep Cover Agent "Dybbak"
RECV: Rebel Alliance High Command
SUBJ: "DARK FORCES"

IN MY POSITION HERE AT THE IMPERIAL INFORMATION BUREAU ON CORUSCANT, I'VE RECENTLY COME ACROSS MAPS AND intelligence with direct bearing on the covert operation code-named "Dark Forces." I'm aware that High Command is using "independent contractors" (i.e. mercenaries) on this op for security reasons, and that if they're captured with the following data my cover may be endangered, but after seeing General Mohc's new "Dark Troopers" up close I'm willing to take the risk. It's unclear whether the Dark Troopers are men in powered armor, droids in human shape, or some unholy "cybrid" of the two, but their capacity for destruction is unquestionably immense. The carnage on Talay will look like a minor docking accident if this nightmare army ever becomes operational.

I have taken the liberty of compiling my information into a brief guide. I request that a datalink be opened so I can transmit this intelligence to our agents with all dispatch.

::DATALINK APPROVED- AUTH. MON MOTHMA, REBEL ALLIANCE HIGH COMMAND::
+++open datalink+++

A detailed guide to the trickier missions in the "Dark Forces" operation is presented later, but time is too short for me to give you a full briefing. Hence a series of general strategic rules are presented first. I only hope that these, along with your natural abilities, will be sufficient to see you through safely.

RULE ONE: Explore everywhere you can before turning to the maps and spoilers. Often a vital switch or key will be in plain sight around a neglected corner.

RULE TWO: When in doubt, push everything (SPACE bar). There are more than a half-dozen different types of switches in Imperial facilities, along with some specialized computer consoles. Until you're familiar with the varieties of instrumentation, try to activate anything that looks even vaguely like a control or button.

RULE THREE: Think in three dimensions. There are many crawlspaces that can only be entered while crouching, along with windows that can be jumped up or down to. Look up and down to see if you're missing anything. Often a previously inaccessible area can be reached by a strategic jump from a higher platform

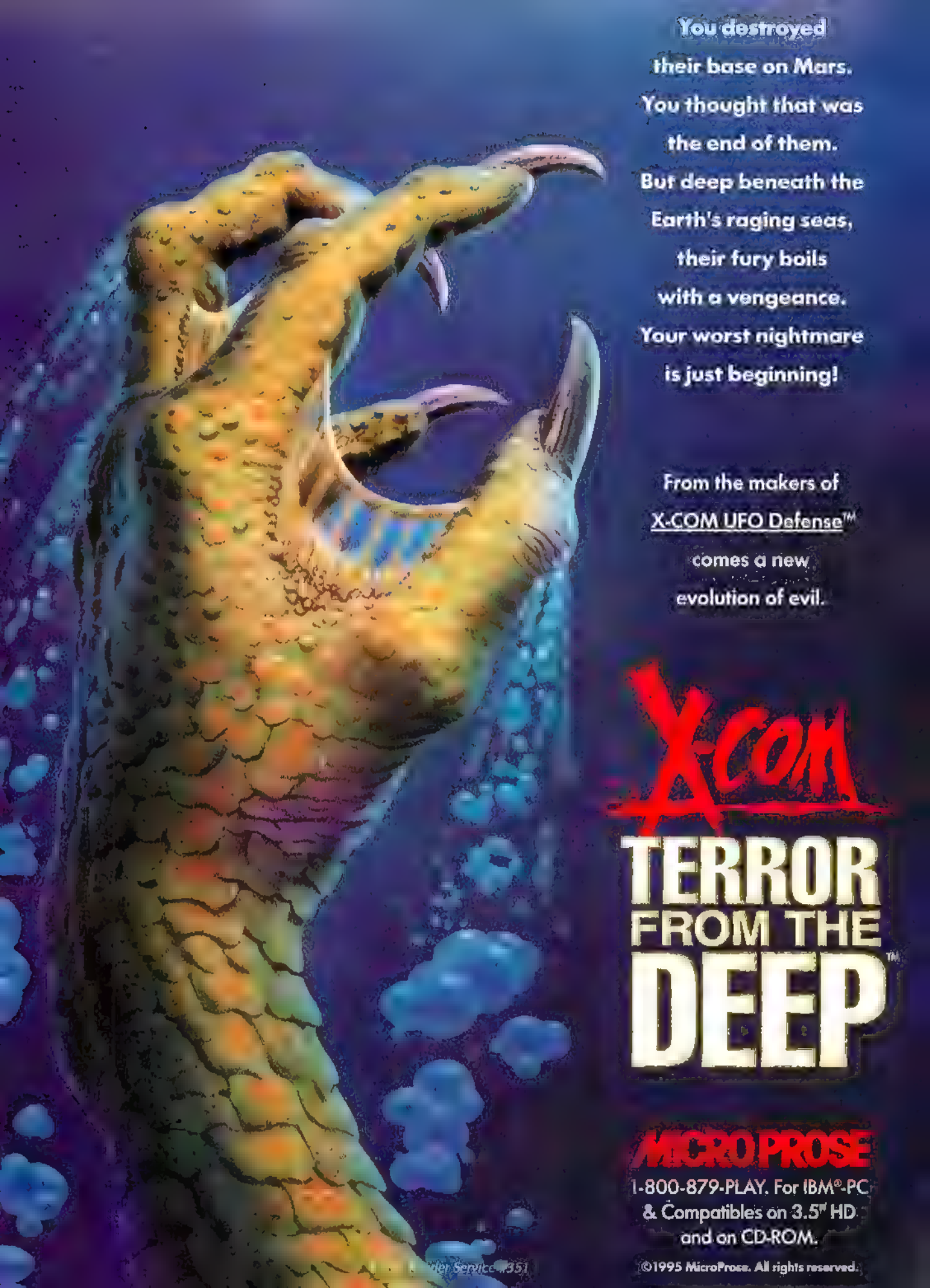
MISSION BY MISSION STRATEGIES

The following section contains detailed discussions of the most difficult missions Maps and illustrations have been included for the more complex puzzles. Also included are the x,y,z coordinates for many locations. Your current coordinates can be brought up by typing the cheat code LADATA (for more cheats, see the sidebar "Cheat Sheet"). The x axis runs east-west, the y axis up-down, and the z axis north-south; each unit is approximately one foot. Truly baffled agents may be able to find what they're looking for with this information.

Each mission description begins with a brief overview, followed by detailed directions on how to crack it. Again, I suggest referring to this only as a last resort.

MISSION 1: SECRET BASE

If you can't handle this one, it's time to go back to herding banthas on Tattooine, farmboy.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their base on Mars.
You thought that was
the end of them.
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MISSION 5: ANOAT CITY

Down in the sewers, you'll have to conserve your resources. If you run out of battery or laser power you're probably dianoga-chow. Be careful not to waste ammo on the elusive remotes; aim carefully and use the Bryar pistol. There are a lot of sewer beasts around, and you're better off avoiding them by staying on the move than by trying to kill them all.

The dial in the central sewer opens one of the four gates every time you push it. You'll have to go down the first three tunnels (#4 is optional) looking for four switches, returning to the central chamber after each passage. The four switches are indicated on the map, and have the following LADATA coordinates:

1) x251, y-4, z347 (past Gate 1)
2) x260, y-5, z317 (past Gate 2)
3) x381, y0, z303 (past Gate 3)
4) x320, y-4, z340 (also past Gate 3)

Once you've done that, open the second gate and you'll be able to proceed north. Do some pillar-jumping to get to a high ledge, where a running leap will take you to Moff Rebus' inner sanctum. Moff himself is up a flight of stairs at x103, y6, z302.

MOFF HUNT When you've jumped your way up to Moff Rebus, Imperial Weapons Engineer, you've successfully completed Mission 3.

MISSION 6: GROMAS MINES

Vertiginous agents might want to get out their VCU's (Vomit Containment Units) for this one. When fighting stormtroopers across the big mine shafts, use your thermal detonators. They work better than lasers, which have a nasty tendency to bounce around

The tough part in the mines is finding the corridor that leads to the reactor. First make sure you get the blue key; it's located on a ledge to your right in the first empty mine-shaft you encounter. Backtrack and go through the "blue" door (it's actually red), and you'll eventually come to what looks like a precipice at x-97, y- 40, z340. A leap, or rather, drop of faith is required: slowly step off the edge and you'll land on a small grating just below. From here you can jump to the tunnel that leads to the reactor.

Set the charges and jet back to the upper levels, where you'll find a large door outlined in red with a switch set into it. This is a blast door, and you'll have to hit the switch and *hold it for a good half-minute* to open up all the doors down the corridor. Run (with SHIFT) down the passage before the doors close again to escape.

MISSION 6: IMPERIAL DETENTION CENTER

This one's tricky. Be careful with your lasers, since most of the walls here are reflective. There are several force-field barriers; if they're pulsing they're turned on, but you can sometimes force your way past one by repeatedly moving forward. Let stormtroopers on the opposite sides of these kill themselves by shooting at you: their bolts will bounce back and hit them. Also watch for the cracked walls, which can be blown open with a mine, mortar, or grenade.

There are two elevators: the western one stops at floors 6, 4, 2, and 1, the eastern at 1, 3, and 5. You can only get to the eastern elevator from the first floor. There are a lot of enemies and supplies all over the place (like the mortar gun on level 4—use code key 3 to get to it), but your primary objective is to reach Madine, who's on level 5. Unfortunately, the door here is locked from the inside, so you need to take a more circuitous route. Here are the things you absolutely need to do:

1) Get the red card from level 1 (it's in the eastern corridor filled with gas). This opens the door by the elevator on level 6. Alternately, you can blast open some walls to gain access to this area.

2) Go to the elevator controls on level 6 and send the car down to level 4 without getting in.

3) Past the red key door is a cramped access space. Crouching, you'll see a small grey door. This leads into the elevator shaft. With a bit of jumping around, you should be able to reach a grimy trash-compactor area.

4) Watch the timing of the pistons, and criss-cross jump between them until you make it to the door. This lets you into the interior of level 5. The code keys from the officers in the outer foyer will open the two cells, one of which holds Madine.

MISSION 8: ROBOTICS FACILITY

The main thing to be aware of here is the ice, which is, as you may have surmised, slippery. Be very careful when approaching chasms and other drop-offs. When swimming against the current, jumping and running (SHIFT key) will help you make quicker progress.

Your first priority is to get the snow boots, located on a shelf just over the edge of a crevasse at map location 1. Once you have these, you'll be able to jump the crevasse and continue around the facility, until you find a doorway into the cliff beside a waterfall (location 2). Go in and float down the river until you come to a plateau at location 3, where a couple of stormtroopers guard the blue key. Grab the key and head for the facility's back door at 4.

Before entering, you might want to check out the secret chambers scattered around outside the facility, such as the strangely familiar looking area at 5.

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Once in, you'll trundle down a series of conveyor belts. Gun turrets are mounted throughout; one useful tactic is to send a proximity mine down the belt ahead of yourself. When you reach a door that won't open, back up, look to your right, and shoot through the window to hit the round red switch, which will open the door. In the main compound, be careful not to fall into the toxic waste, and hit switches as necessary to proceed. Directly across from the big spinning turbine is a room (accessible by a difficult perpendicular jump from a treadmill) with a switch that turns on a fan, which will clear the fumes from the lower level. If you don't have a gasmask yet, you might want to seek this out, otherwise you'll shortly be sucking poison. The last switch you come across will open a panel high in a nearby wall for a few seconds; crouch and jump in, turn off the spinning turbine, then leap down into the shaft, which will take you to the three charge sites.

MISSION 10: JABBA'S SHIP

The tough part of this mission is the beginning, when you're stripped of gear and tossed into a pit with a Kell dragon. You might think you have to outwit the beast somehow by dropping a door on its head or something. Think again: this is a test of primal machismo. Good thing you mercenary-types all have mean left hooks. Again, there are few stormtroopers on Jabba's ship, so watch your laser ammo. The fusion cutter works well against Gamorrean guards and dragons. Beware the large number of mines strewn about—run backwards when you hear their arming beep or set them off with grenades. One does wonder how Jabba's henchmen get to work in the morning.

SHOCK THE DRAGON On Jabba's barge, you'll have to defeat his fearsome Kell dragons in hand-to-hand combat if you want to escape; sure would be nice if you had a gun at this point...

The switch in the arena lowers a ledge so you can jump up, but be sure you've killed all the dragons first, or they'll step on pressure plates that raise it again. Go to the opposite side of the platform and step out onto the ledge on that side...follow it to the central area, where you can jump across to the blue key. The blue key lets you out of the arena, and into an area full of Gamorrean guards. Kill the Gran across the pit with grenades, then jump over, turn around, and jump again to the platform on your right. Hitting the switch here will open up the way to your gear, hanging from the roof in a nearby room. Once you've got your guns back, the rest of the mission is a relatively straightforward blast-fest.

BOBA ABOVE ME Everyone's favorite bounty hunter is lurking in level 11.

MISSION 11: IMPERIAL CITY

About the only good thing you can say about this mission is that there's no shortage of blaster ammo due to the fact that there are several dozen Imperials gunning for you here. There's never been a better time or place to use the concussion rifle. After blasting through several waves of stormtroopers, you should be able to make your way to a large, sinister-looking building, in which you'll eventually encounter a Dark Trooper Type II. Keep calm and you can beat him; the environment has a lot of room for you to dodge around in.

After you dispose of the Dark Trooper, you should be able to find your way to the ISO building; it's a hexagon with three concentric walls inside. Check the walls by the entrance for a map showing the various doors and corridors.

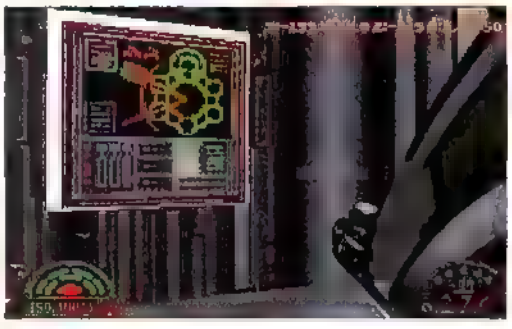
Each door switch in the outer ring controls not only the door next to it, but the two parallel doors in the middle and center ring as well. Only one of these doors can be open at any given time, so your task here is to set the panels so that you can make your way to the center. This is tricky, but it can be done with a little thought and frequent reference to the map.

If you're still stuck, go to the northern central "slice" of the complex, and work your way counterclockwise to the north-east chamber. Set the first panel to 3, i.e press it until the bottom light on the panel goes dark. Do the same for the next three, then set the last two panels so that the middle light is dark. You should now be able to get into the computer core.

MISSION 12: FUEL STATION

There are an awful lot of stormtroopers here... so many, in fact, that you won't be able to kill them all. Be prepared for troopers popping up in areas you thought you had cleared. In the central area, watch out for Trandoshans sniping from the four towers.

The blue key is in the cafeteria in the north-eastern wing of the station. Next, find your way into the large central chamber with the elevated bridge and the four towers. Hit the second level



TOTALLY TUBULAR Here's the control panel for the station's docking tube. Use it to swing the station's docking tube over to the smuggler's ship so you can escape.

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switch in the entrance tower. This will swing the bridge one station counterclockwise, revealing the ground-floor button on the southwest tower. Hit this switch, then quickly run back to the first tower, taking the elevator back to the top level. From here you can jump to the moving bridge, which will carry you to the upper level of the southwest tower. Hit the switch here, and the bridge will swing around to the northeastern tower. Flipping the switch here will turn the bridge one final station counterclockwise, to the northwestern tower. Note: you *can* leap to the northwestern tower from the top of the central ring, avoiding all this work, but it is *very* difficult.

Follow the hallway to the control room, where you'll see a large illuminated screen depicting the station. Push the screen until the southwestern arm is highlighted: this will swing the station's docking tube over to the smuggler's ship. Return to the main ring of the station and make your way back to the ship.

The Rebel's Cheat Sheet

LAPOSTAL: [illegible] postal," as in wreaking havoc [illegible] as in full weapon and health powerups.

LARAMEY: [illegible]

LASKIER: [illegible]

LAIRS: [illegible]

LAIMLAME: Full invulnerability, really only recommended to those who can't figure out what it means.

LADATAS: [illegible] you are, down to the inch.

LAREDLITE: Freezes all enemies. Repeat to unfreeze.

LAPOLO: [illegible] clipping off. In other words, you can just walk straight up walls.

LAIRUS: [illegible]

The Exploding Express Elevator

This isn't a cheat, really, but it is a useful way to get to platforms too high for you to normally reach. Stand next to the platform, then lay a mine at your feet. When it blows, you'll be tossed two stories straight up. As you might have guessed, this isn't a good trick to use if you have no shields and 1% health.

MISSION 14: THE ARC HAMMER

This is almost certainly the hardest mission in the operation, due to both the combat and the puzzles. There are a lot of Dark Troopers of both types here. Be cautious, use hiding places, and destroy Type I's from above when you have the chance.

You have to set three sequencer charges before you can escape the ship:

Charge 1: Head for location 1 on the first map, past the robot arm in the shaft. Flipping the switch here raises the platform at location 2 up to the red door, enabling you to cross. At 3, you'll have to kill a couple of Type I Dark Troopers before you can continue south. The panel at location 4 opens the door to 5 for a few seconds, but be careful when you jump across: a Type II Dark Trooper waits within. The hand panel at 6 raises the stairs behind you, enabling you to loop around and jump across the avenue to the narrow ledge at 7. To hit the switch at 8, you'll have to run, jump, and press it while falling. Climb back up again and jump to the corridor at 9, proceeding north until you find some low tunnels that lead to a machinery room. Take out the two turrets and jump down. There's a button hidden behind a piston at 10; shoot it, and you can access the first sequencer charge site at 11. Exit via the elevator at 12 that will have just opened up.

Charge 2: Clamber over the pistons and you should be able to find a raised area with red and grey striped walls. The second charge site is north of this area, at x-465, y64, z636, guarded by a Type I Dark Trooper. After setting the charge, take the treadmill to the red door that will have opened up at x-500, y64, z422.

Charge 3: You'll come to an area with several conveyor belts running above a lower chamber. This is one of the hardest spots in the whole operation; if you fall into the lower area, you'll have to invest a lot of time and energy getting back up to try again. The first few treadmills will take you where you want to go with few problems, so long as you duck when you see an overhang coming up, and shoot the circular red button when you spot it to open the door ahead. Eventually you'll come to 1 on the second map. Now you

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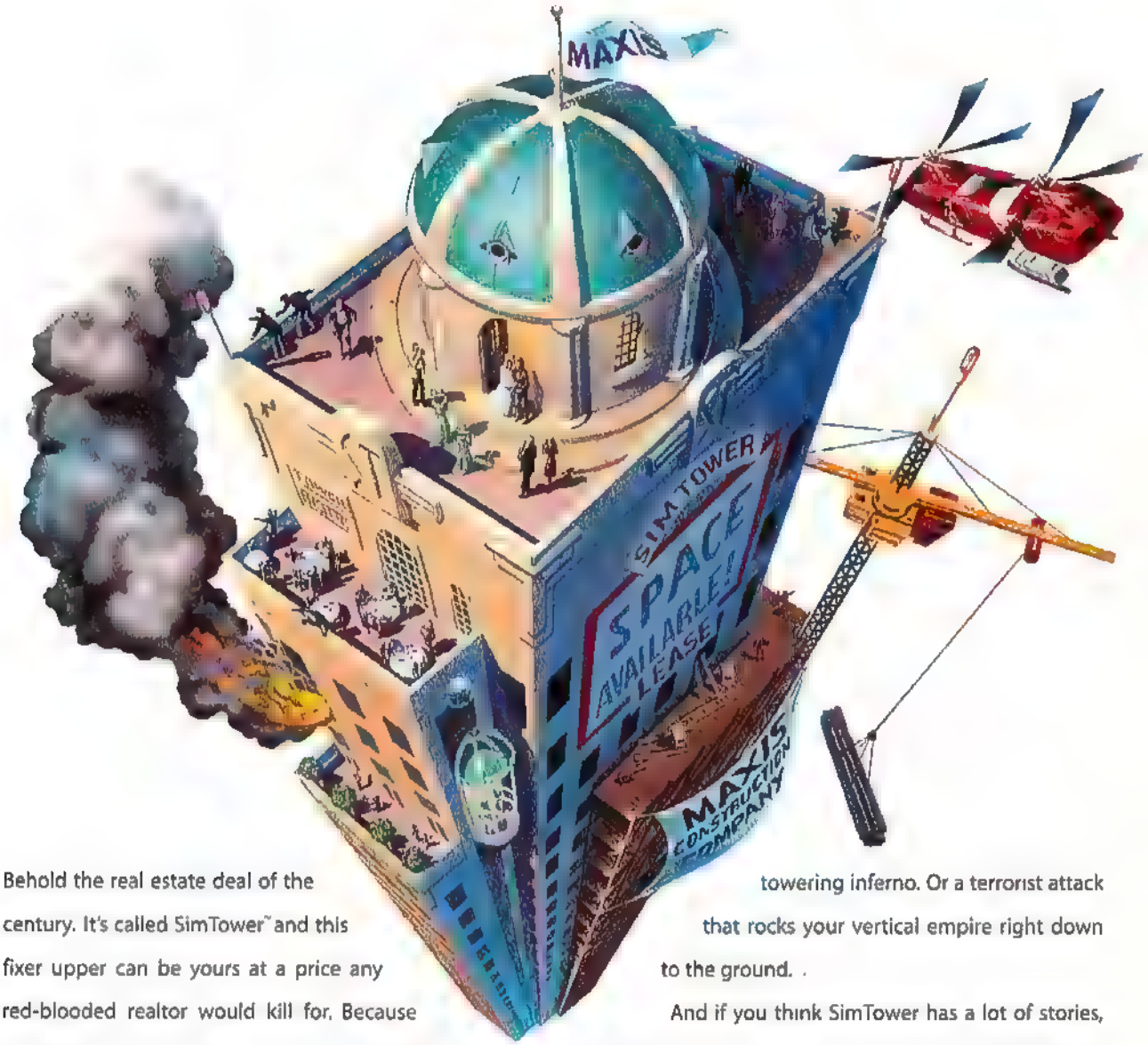

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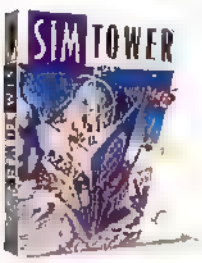

The Vertical Empire.

MAXIS

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have to follow the path shown on the map to get to location 2. Jump when you see a low diagonal wall ahead of you, and be prepared to move to take the correct turn-off at the dividers. The pattern is right, left, left. At 2, jump over the low wall and you should be carried to 3, where a switch will deactivate the treadmills. Leave the room, and step off the treadmill to your right at 4. You'll be able to proceed to 5, where there are five red switches and a strange-looking wall. The switches raise and lower the five middle segments of the wall; you need to form an unbroken circuit. Go back to the elevator, and you should be able to proceed to the final sequencer charge site, where another switch hidden behind a piston will open up the panel for the charge at x-464, y64, z-224. From here it's just a short jaunt to the final showdown with General Mohc and his contingent of Type II Dark Troopers.

I have further intelligence to transmit, but I think my datalink is being traced even now. One last piece of advice: remember, whatever you do, never, ever try to get a Wookie to—

Wait. Someone is at the door... I suspect my cover has been blown. Good luck, and may the Force be with you! rKSD.gSh*(S24(* &@HJ K $(S) FL&!

+++datalink break+++

::end report::

::end transmission::

Strong-Arming the Dark Side

Imperial Small Arms Catalog, 73rd edition. ISO Military Research Division. Printed in Coruscant City.

Do Not Discard! Eyes Only: Some Data Not Yet Declassified

MODIFIED BRYAR PISTOL

Colloquially known as a "blaster," this compact weapon is actually more powerful and accurate than the Stormtrooper Rifle. The slow rate of fire makes it a liability in major firefights, but the pistol can be very effective in picking off enemies from long range, while crouching or using cover.

STORMTROOPER RIFLE

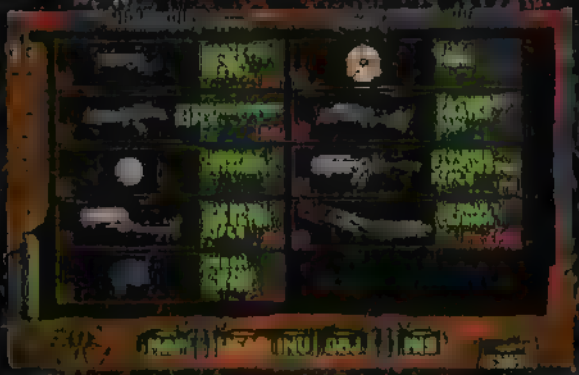
Massive rate of fire makes this the ideal close-range weapon, but the power drain can be excessive. Many troopers have complained about the weapon's accuracy, stating that it "can't hit the broad side of a Rebel freighter." We here at Military Research dispute this rumor: In test firings, the rifle hit the flank of a freighter from 10 meters out fully 50 percent of the time.

THERMAL DETONATOR

As a weapon, the thermal detonator is flexible, but dangerous and difficult to use properly. Tacticians suggest rolling a timed bomb down a staircase to surprise anyone waiting at the bottom, or bouncing one off a wall. Personnel-intensive testing has indicated that detonators should not be used at close quarters, in areas with low ceilings, or near large explosives caches.

IMPERIAL REPEATER RIFLE

This weapon was slated to go into production as the new standard trooper sidearm, but budget cuts, ballooning price estimates, and contractual difficulties have sadly delayed this. The autogun is perhaps the best all-around personal weapon available. If ammo can be found. Accurate to long range, with good damage and a quick reload time.



FUSION CUTTER

This was never intended as a weapon, but is offered here for budget-conscious Imperial commanders. The fusion cutter doesn't really do that much damage, is cumbersome in point-blank encounters, and inaccurate at long range. Testing shows it has potential in riot-control situations involving targets without ranged weapons. With practice, it can be effective in medium-short range firefights, and if you have ammo to burn, the secondary fire option, triggering all four tubes at once, is useful for clearing Rebels from small areas or corridors.

I.M. MINES

Another weapon that requires some skill to use properly. Mines are probably most effective versus opponents who try to close for melee combat, but some forethought is necessary. Some troopers have reported that mines can be placed on elevators, then sent up or down to clear a room of Rebels or other scum.

MORTAR GUN

Problems of use are similar to thermal detonators. Though the mortar gun is less flexible, it has a longer range, quicker rate of fire, and a greater blast radius. Note that the trajectory of a mortar gun's shell is ideal for attacking enemies in high places.

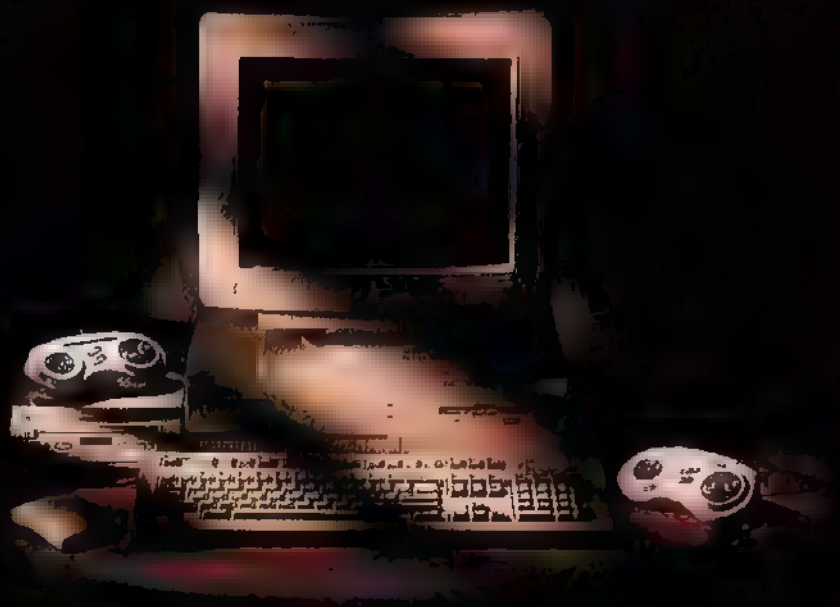
CONCUSSION RIFLE

This weapon was rejected by the Imperial Army after tests resulted in hideously high "friendly fire" casualties, but it is often used by bounty hunters, Rebels, and lone-wolf mercenaries indifferent to personal safety. Extremely hazardous at close range, where the shooter can easily get caught in the chain reaction, it is also hard to aim at a distance, particularly at targets at a higher or lower elevation. Still, against large groups of enemies in close formation, the concussion rifle's destructive effects are unmatched.

ASSAULT CANNON

This top-secret prototype is extremely rare, and ammo is scarce and expensive. The cannon's destructive potential is immense; its plasma bolts can kill almost anything with one or two shots, and the missile launcher provides a blast equivalent to the Mortar Gun, only with better range. While close-in fighting is hindered by the weapon's bulk and lack of speed, we here at Weapons Research feel that having the firepower of a small starfighter perched on your shoulder is worth it.

With the right game,
it's fifty times faster
than any kid's system.



Circle Reader Service #69

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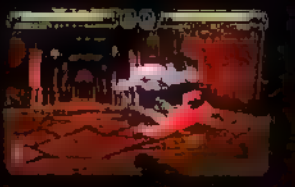

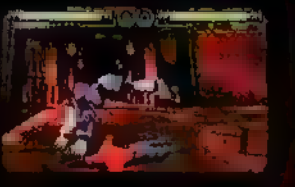

PC Gamer magazine described FX Fighter as "ground-breaking." And we're grateful. But to be honest, with all that power sitting on the desktop, we just felt that the last thing the world needed was another damn word-processor.

GET IT OR DIE TRYING. For 486/Pentium PCs with CD-ROMs.

Developed by Argonaut Software Ltd.

GTE Entertainment

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Roundball Wishes and Hoop Dreams

Electronic Arts Hits Nothing But Net With NBA LIVE '95

by George Jones

THE ARENA OF COMPUTER BASKETBALL HAS ALWAYS BEEN A PRETTY DEPRESSING PLACE. MOST OF THE time the court is as quiet as a church, and there's always a layer of dust on the parquet. Every now and then a team rolls through town, but never one with much talent; only the diehard come to cheer, and not with much enthusiasm.

What's behind this sad state of affairs? Over the years, some developers have suggested that the computer hardware of the time wasn't up to the basketball task: there was just too much going on—too much motion, finesse and strategy in a 5-on-5 game—for processors to handle. In spite of the obstacles, a few companies (such as **Bethesda** with its NCAA games) have taken shots at 5-on-5 titles, but they weren't quite able to pull it off.

But now it's 1995, and inadequate hardware excuses sink like so much concrete. Thankfully sports game developers across the country have put away the excuses in exchange for hoop dreams. Everyone from **Acclaim** to **MicroLeague** to **Sony** is promising basketball titles later on this year. At last, the basketball scene is heating up, the competition is facing off, and fans like myself couldn't be happier.

NBA LIVE '95

Price: $59.95, CD-ROM
System Requirements: IBM compatible 486DX/33 or better, 8MB RAM, SVGA graphics, 3 MB hard drive space (15MB recommended), CD-ROM; supports most major sound cards.
Protection: None
Developer: Hitman Productions
Publisher: Electronic Arts
San Mateo, CA
(415) 571-7171

The first salvo in the Hoop Wars of '95 has been fired. **EA Sports'** NBA LIVE '95 has hit the streets, and it's making quite a stir. Much like EA Sports' other wildly popular title, NHL HOCKEY '95, this game truly captures the spirit of its sport using stunning graphics and unbelievably fluid gameplay.

TAKIN' IT TO THE HOOP

Immediately upon booting up NBA LIVE I was overwhelmed by full screen digitized video footage of jams, slams and rejections accompanied by a cool bass-driven score. An interface with TV broadcast-quality visuals guided me into my first game, where I pitted the two All-Star teams against each other. I haven't been the same gamer since.

Basketball has *never* looked this good. The large, individually rendered players (yes, Rodman has white hair and Cliff Robinson wears his headband) move fluidly and realistically. High flying dunks, around-the-back passes, textbook jumpshots—they're all here. On the very first play of my first game, Shaquille O'Neal beat me to the goal, threw down a ferocious dunk, and then *pointed in my player's face*. I've spent the better part of the last month trying to return the favor.

The court is viewed from a unique, semi-isometric perspective. Although only about a third of the court is displayed at any one time, NBA LIVE's perspective communicates a sense of depth and court awareness that I've never seen before. The only drawback of not being able to see the entire half-court at once is obvious: it's hard to know where the man you're supposed to be guarding is if you can't see him. There is a high resolution

"A contender for the digitized Stanley Cup."
"The way hockey was meant to be seen."
– Computer Gaming World

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BRETT HULL HOCKEY 95

ANY MORE REALISTIC AND YOU WOULDN'T WANT TO PLAY IT.

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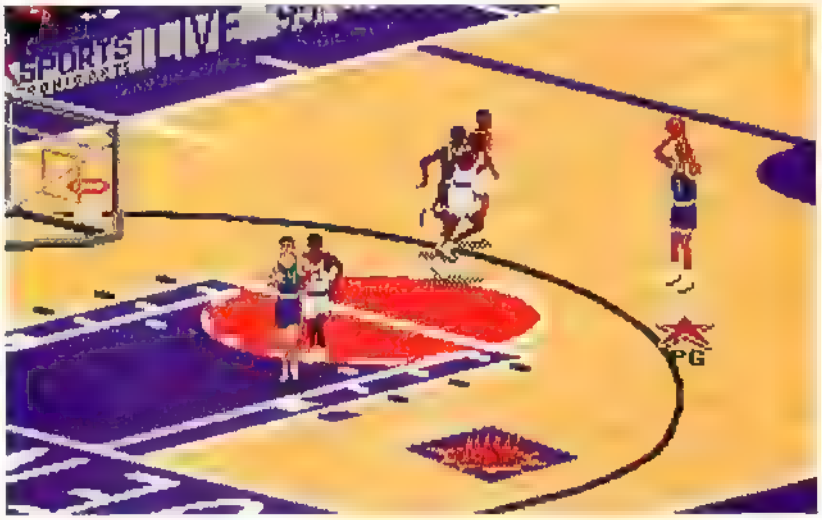
Circle Reader Service #287

view that allows gamers to see more than three-quarters of the court at once, but the size of the players shrinks so much that it's hard to tell what's going on.

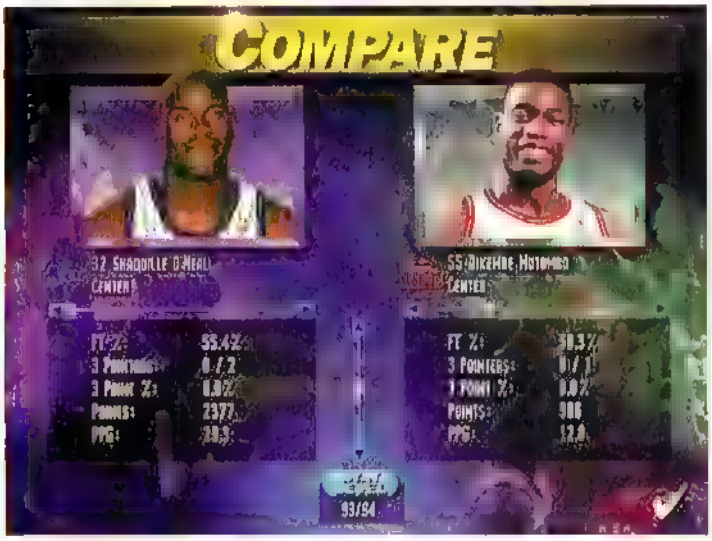
A PLAYER'S PLAYER

Happily, NBA LIVE matches quality graphics with quality gameplay. Players are easily controlled through either a joystick, mouse or the keyboard, all of which work fine. Head-to-head play and team play are supported. In fact, up to four players can be involved in a game simultaneously. Two or three buttons, which may be reconfigured, control all the action: passing, shooting and jumping, and "turbo-boost," which gives a player a burst of speed for beating a defender to a loose ball or to the hole.



TRIFECTA, BABY! Three pointers and jump shots can make the difference in NBA LIVE '95, particularly when playing against a human opponent.

After dozens and dozens of games, I still can't get over how much this game *feels* like basketball. Players move around realistically, setting picks and running realistic offensive patterns. Throw the ball into the post and the center establishes his pivot foot. If he's close enough to the hoop, he could take a hook shot, pump fake and shoot, or kick the ball out to an open man for a trifecta. Monster jams are here in all their glory, but outside shooting is also an integral part of a winning strategy—a refreshing change from the typical digital slamfest. Rebounding and defensive play are similarly realistic; getting out in front of passing lanes and cutting off opponents' penetration is the key here.



THIS OLD SHAQ When NBA star Shaquille O'Neal isn't starring in his own Kung-Fu games, he's putting up points and taking down rebounds in NBA LIVE.

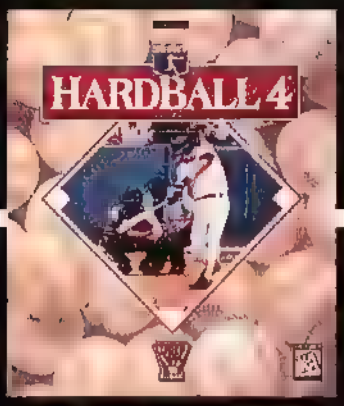
Gamers also have a full set of coaching tools to fine-tune their clubs. Each set offense has eight different plays that can be called during any dead ball, as well as defensive sets like the half-court trap and the full-court press. Double teams and defensive matchups can be selected, and player substitution is easily accomplished through a click and drag interface.

NBA LIVE is no slouch statistically. Each player is numerically rated in several categories and has a complete database of season and game statistics. League leaders in over 20 different categories, from points-per-game to rebounds, can be sorted simply by clicking a button. Players around the league put up the kind of numbers one would expect during the season. Shaq led the league in scoring and John Stockton led the league in assists. My only quibble with the statistics is that when I play a season with 5 minute quarters, the rest of the league's stats are compiled based on 12 minute quarters, so my guys, as hard as they play, never make the league leaders.

EYE-BYE AI

Unfortunately, NBA LIVE has some AI oddities, particularly when it comes to end-game strategies. One such problem, arising when your team is up by a decent margin, sometimes causes the computer-controlled team to shoot itself out of a game by attempting low percentage three pointers almost every time down the court. Another problem is a failure by the AI to recognize certain game situations in the final minute. In one game, I was up 3 points with 7 seconds left to go. A computer-controlled Kevin Johnson stole the ball from me and, instead of putting up a three to tie the game, chose to lay the ball up. In another situation, I was up by four points, and the computer had the ball with 33 seconds to go. Instead of choosing to get a shot off quickly, the point guard decided to yo-yo the ball up and down at the top of the key for 20 seconds before forcing up a three pointer.

Another potential problem is that the computer player isn't very tough. NBA LIVE is a little too easy to win. Much like the original NHL HOCKEY for the PC, you'll find yourself winning most of your games if you play with a fair to decent team, even on the most difficult setting. Thankfully, taking a team from the dregs



With all due respect to Minnesota and Atlanta, HardBall may be the greatest series of all time.

"HardBall 4 isn't merely better (than ESPN Baseball), it's in another league entirely."
– Entertainment Weekly

"HardBall 4 is without a doubt the most realistic baseball simulation you can buy."
– Electronic Entertainment

"Great graphics and fantastic arcade action are what have made the HardBall series the most popular action-oriented ball games around."
– Computer Gaming World

There is no debate. HardBall is the best-selling PC baseball game series of all time. And now, HardBall 4 has refined playability and realism to an unfair level that has the experts adjective-silly. You get 28 stadiums that are now more detailed, from the nasty winds at The Stick to the ERA-bruising altitude at Mile High. Stat compilation in over 75 categories. And HardBall's greatest graphics ever, with unequalled high-resolution digitized video graphics that'll have you swearing you see all 108 stitches. If you want a PC baseball game, get HardBall 4. And when talk turns to the greatest game ever, you can say you were there.

Want to try HardBall 4? Download the demo from the Internet via anonymous ftp or through your WWW Browser at ftp://ftp.network.com/pub/accolade/hb4demo.zip or via our BBS at 408-296-8800.

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of the league can make that upward climb a lot more difficult, as can playing 5 minute quarters with all the realism levels turned on. Honestly though, I had such a blast playing the game that I really didn't mind the easily conquered learning curve as I took the Golden State Warriors to their first NBA championship.

ARENA WITH A VIEW Although the high resolution looks really good and allows you to see most of the court at once, serious gamers will probably find it impractical.

SLAM DUNK

NBA LIVE is fully configurable. Exhibition play, 26-, 52- or 82-game seasons and the playoffs are all available, as are a host of game options, from the foul sensitivity level to whether or not the ball can go out of bounds. And with the exception of a few players who have their own licensing arrangements (Mr. Robinson and Mr. Barkley), all the pro players are here in rosters that were current as of the Feb. 23 deadline.

I have a hunch that NBA LIVE will go down as one of the best sports simulations of the year for two reasons. First, it is the first fun basketball released for a basketball-hungry sports crowd. Second, it is extremely good, even considering the flaws. Remember when NHL HOCKEY '94 came out, and how many flaws it had? Remember how good it was regardless? It's the same situation here. If you've been dying, like me, for a hoops sim, then you really need to get this game—no ifs, ands or buts.

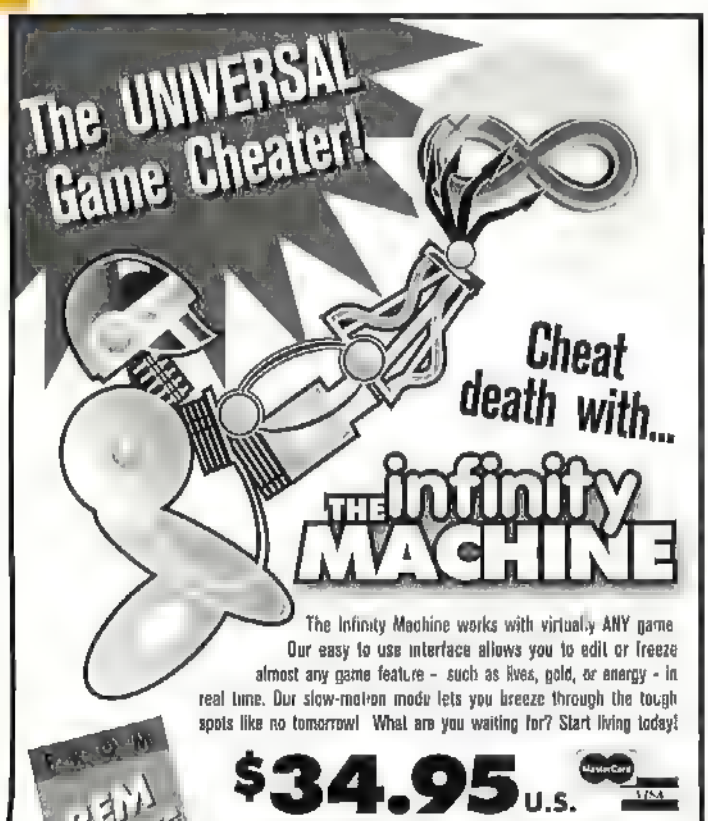
THE EDITORS SPEAK

NBA LIVE '95

RATING 4.5 stars

PROS Far and away the best basketball sim to ever hit the market, combining stunning visuals with fluid game action and a fairly robust statistical model.

CONS Some flaws in the AI make the game a little too easy to beat. The high-resolution view is virtually useless unless you have a huge monitor.



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Hull Freezes Over

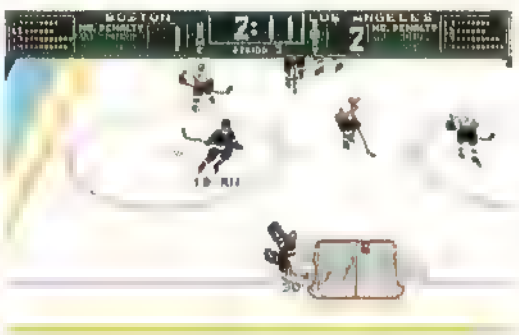
Accolade's BRETT HULL HOCKEY Goes Strong To The Net, But Can It Score?

by Gordon Goble

THE MAN WITH ALL THE ANNOYING CHARACTERISTICS—TOOTHY GRIN, BLOND MANE, SCORCHING SLAP shot, and multi-million dollar salary—has finally seen fit to lend his celebrated name to a mere computer game. He is St. Louis Blues right-winger Brett Hull, the hockey icon whom women swoon over and men can only envy. The game is BRETT HULL HOCKEY 95. There is a striking likeness between the two.

In the real world, Brett Hull is capable of bladed feats of wonder and fits of greatness, yet he somehow seems incapable of leading his team to the top of their profession—a daunting task for any one person. On the computer screen BRETT HULL HOCKEY shows the same flashes of brilliance as its namesake, taking simulated hockey to lofty new pinnacles of graphic realism, yet it lacks championship quality as an overall package.

BRETT HULL HOCKEY also shares many similarities with the reigning king of PC hockey, **Electronic Arts'** NHL HOCKEY '95. Both games were developed in Canada, both were originally conceived on cartridge systems, both have licenses from the NHL Players Association, and both place their emphasis squarely on the on-ice action. BRETT HULL forsakes some of the front office and statistical functions to which PC hockey fans have become accustomed, but on the ice, it really puts the action, from booming slapshots to brutal bodychecks, right in your face.



AT CLOSE RANGE The gorgeous graphics won't stop you from pounding your fists in frustration as time and time again you fail to convert close-range shots.

BRETT HULL HOCKEY 95

Price: $59.95
System Requirements: IBM compatible 386/33 or better (486 highly recommended), 8 MB RAM, VGA graphics, 10 MB hard drive space, CD-ROM; supports most major sound cards.
# of Players: 1-2 (same computer)
Protection: None
Designers: Radical Entertainment Ltd
Publisher: Accolade Inc.
San Jose, CA
(800) 245-7744

THE VIEW FROM HERE

Players of EA's NHL HOCKEY series will feel like they've moved from the cheap seats to the center of the face-off circle. While the viewing angle is much the same as in NHL HOCKEY '95, BRETT HULL brings the action much closer and displays it with more detail. So magnified is the playing area that the left and right boards are often not simultaneously visible. The players themselves are tall and lanky, and consequently move more fluidly and more realistically. Even the hockey sticks resemble real life hockey sticks as opposed to some odd, overgrown limb.

Furthermore, BRETT HULL offers the best representation to date of the true scale of player vs. rink, giving the gamer a good idea of just how far players must skate to travel from one end to the other. The only drawback to the game's perspective is a small one: the area behind the far net ("Gretzky's Office") is almost imperceptible and very difficult to use on the offense.

Taking all this visual realism into account, I had but a single thought in my mind as I began guiding the powerhouse Detroit Somethings through the opening games of a new season: I really wanted this game to succeed. I wanted players to reflect their real-life characteristics, I wanted them to exhibit strong artificial intelligence, and I wanted scoring chances to be the result of my smart coaching and joystick dexterity. In short, I wanted what all hockey sim fans want—a true-to-life computer hockey game

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I didn't quite get it. While there were moments where I was completely caught up in the action, this is not a game with which I'd play through an entire season. This is not to say that BRETT HULL doesn't succeed on various levels, just that there are limits on its long-term potential.

DEJA VU ALL OVER AGAIN

The most noticeable problem is a repetitiveness in the flow of play. Halfway through my third game, I felt a strange sense of *deja-vu*. Hadn't Coffey gobbled up the puck at that *exact same spot*, moved it forward to Steve Yzerman in that *exact same spot*, who in turn skated in on Kurvers and Corkum in *those same spots*, moved around them in the *exact same way*, then walked in alone on goal only to be stymied by goalie Ed Belfour time and time again? Certainly the passing and player movement is crisp and authentic, but the placement and actions of the combatants seems "hard wired."

PUCK, NO! The acrobatic goalies don't let too many shots get by them, which is good considering they'll sometimes face more than 100 shots in a game.

I quickly found that I was able to sneak my puck-carrying winger out from the opposition's corner to the front of the net almost at will. This simple movement soon became one of my most trusty moves, yet after getting into point-blank range repeatedly (a very high percentage opportunity in real life hockey), I found it virtually impossible to pop the biscuit into the basket. This just doesn't jibe with real life, and inevitably becomes annoying. To further complicate matters, computer-controlled goalies tend to hold the puck way too long, even after the opposing team completely clears the offensive zone, which results in many dumb "delay of game" calls. Finally, I seem to get the best offensive results from wild, indiscriminate clicking of joystick buttons, rather than well-considered play.

Putting these criticisms aside, there is enough of a product here to warrant a serious look by computer hockey devotees. BRETT HULL is the first hockey simulation to offer a "play-by-play" description of the action through the distinguished voice of Al Michaels, who does an admirable job. Hearing him exclaim, "...And 16 just nails him," followed by "That's gotta hurt!" right on cue is good for some laughs and adds character to the game

BRETT HULL does offers the option of head-to-head play against a friend on the same computer. But most of us, who usually wind up playing Mr. Computer, will find ourselves quickly experiencing something we're not used to—losing! Given the ease with which aficionados of prior hockey releases can march to victory, maybe the very real possibility of an initial string of losses isn't so bad. Checking isn't easy, nor is scoring, although passing the puck both looks great and is a snap to execute. Although proficiency is gained with time, miscues and giveaways will often result in goals against you and one more notch in the loss column by the final whistle.

Even sending the feared Pittsburgh team in against pitiful Ottawa won't bring guaranteed success. The key to this game is in the prevention of scoring opportunities, but even after some familiarization, those blasted Ottawans still pumped 93 shots at my beleaguered goaltender. Amazingly, my computer-controlled puckstoppers were up the task.

As for front office duties, well, there isn't a lot here that requires explanation. There are no trades and no team/league creation, although players may customize their own squad. Each team is given an overall ranking based on a number of characteristics that can be individually modified. Feel free to manipulate the sluggish San Jose Sharks into a speedy unit, but be forewarned that boosting one area can only come at the expense of another. Pre-set player combinations may be juggled, but in groups of five only, powerplay and penalty-killing units cannot be modified. During gameplay, line changes may be made manually, or for hockey wimps, automatically.

Statistically, BRETT HULL is wanting. Although individual game summaries are thorough, season long stats are not compiled, apart from team wins, losses, goals for/against and points. One may contest a single game, seasons of 84, 42 or 11 games, or a 3, 5 or 7 game playoff series. For those glorious moments of hockey immortality, BRETT HULL does have a replay feature, although only five plays may be saved at any one time and are hard-drive history once the game is completed. The interface is nowhere near as pretty as either WAYNE GRETZKY or NHL HOCKEY, and without a mouse it is actually quite clumsy. Audio accompaniment is satisfactory with appropriate at-rink sounds and limp music. Printing is not supported.

HITTING THE POST

It would be pretty easy to say that BRETT HULL HOCKEY 95 was a great idea with a sterling graphical approach that somehow got muddled along the way to its release It would also be easy to say that BRETT HULL HOCKEY 95 sure has the feel of a product that ran smack into a fast approaching release deadline. These would be easy things to say, so...I'll say them.

What's not easy to say is that this game is *not* the next great hockey simulation. I was so hoping that it would be, that the great graphical presentation would be backed up by strong gameplay. Accolade could have had a Great One in BRETT HULL, but not quite this time, not quite this release.

THE EDITORS SPEAK

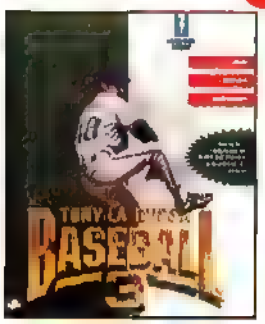
BRETT HULL HOCKEY 95

RATING 3

PROS Innovative visuals, lifelike player movement and Al Michaels' play-by-play.

CONS Odd opponent intelligence, repetitive game flow, and too much stuff that doesn't sync with the real thing. Low fuel in the stats tank.

Big League Heat



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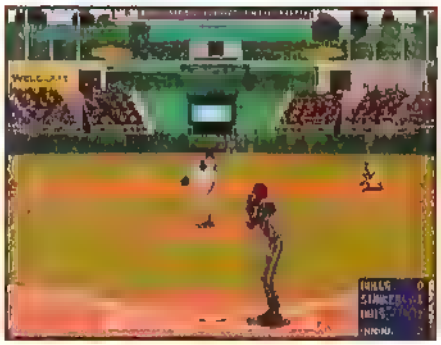

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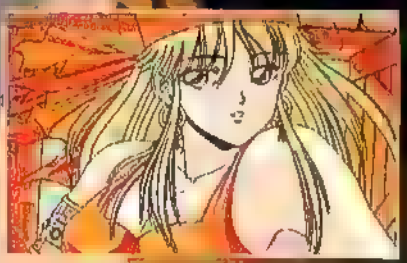

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System: IBM compatible, CD-ROM or diskette version available. Requires a 386-SX (486 recommended), VGA graphics, conventional memory only, sound .

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Fly the Crowded Skies

BOGEY'S BAR & GRILL

MULTIPLAYER SIMULATIONS ARE BRINGING INTENSE COMPETITION TO THE ON-LINE WORLD

by Denny Atkin

After playing the latest crop of multiplayer games, I realized that single-player gaming was doomed—or "Doomed," as the case may be. Even lackluster human players can provide tactical challenges and surprises that you won't get from the most sophisticated computer opponents. Human players add a level of unpredictability that computer algorithms just can't duplicate. Although multiple players make run-and-shoot games like Doom a blast to play, it's in the area of simulations—where strategy and control finesse play a larger part than brute force and quick reflexes—that adding flesh-and-blood players can truly redefine the experience.

FIGHT & FLIGHT An La-7 and a Zero do the "air war watusi" in Confirmed Kill's on-line arena. A single battle area could potentially hold up to 100 hot shot pilots looking for a "dance partner."

Many game programmers seem to agree. Whenever I visit a development house, I notice that "lunch hour" is usually spent playing multiplayer games on a network—whether the company's own games in development or popular net-capable programs like Falcon 3.0 and Doom. Adam Levesque, a producer at **Papyrus**, says his company is no exception. "The future of computer games is multiplayer. We have a league in house that we run to do testing," he says. "It's unbelievable what a different game it is to play it like that." Thursday nights often find 32 people playing NASCAR Racing on the Papyrus local area network. And these folks race with a fervor that's much more intense than someone playing solo. It's one thing to try to drive well enough to beat a group of computer players, and quite another to try to lap the guy down the hall.

"The psychology is different, it's just an unbelievable notch above the single-player version," Levesque says. Unfortunately, most of us don't have easy access to a local area network packed with competition-crazed sim fans. Many simulations have offered modem options, but only against a single player. Sure, we could take on groups of opponents on the on-line networks, but except for a few notable ex-

ON THE RADAR

CGW Intelligence has discovered that Bob Carter, founder of Thrustmaster, has started another company, Military Simulations, Inc., because "no one has ever done a flight simulator right." With a long list of aerospace credentials (Boeing, McDonnel Douglas, Lockheed, etc.) in hand, Carter has set out to create Fighting Falcon: Back To Baghdad. The flight model physics are being developed by a Detroit-based company that does work for the U.S. military (they're using declassified stuff for this game, of course) and the graphics are being done in the UK using Renderware. Fighting Falcon will feature texture-mapped images moving at a very fast frame rate, but will require the fastest Pentium you can get. Look for the roll-out in the third quarter of 95.

ceptions such as **Kesmai**'s AIR WARRIOR, on-line sims haven't been able to hold their own technology-wise against their store-bought counterparts.

Companies like Papyrus are working to solve that problem by offering on-line multiplayer options for their off-the-shelf sims. "We're setting up our own multiplayer BBS here," explains Levesque, "so that people will be able to call in from around the country and play NASCAR." The BBS, which should be on-line around the end of summer, will allow NASCAR players to race in groups with up to 33 human players.

Why don't they use one of the commercial on-line networks? "We need a really low-latency network," says Levesque. "We just can't have lag in a racing game." Lag, or warping, occurs when one player's game information arrives at the main computer long after another's has, thus causing that vehicle to suddenly jump to another spot in the virtual universe. There's nothing more frustrating than cutting off a racing opponent only to have him suddenly reappear 50 feet in front of you.

"We're going to try to get [a Japanese flight sim squadron] involved in the Battle of Midway scenario," says Bryan Walker, producer of CONFIRMED KILL. "I'm not sure how politically correct it is to reopen old wounds, but I think they'll get a kick out of it."

CONFIRMED COOL

At press time, Papyrus wasn't sure what method it was going to use to combat the lag problem while still making the game available without huge long-distance charges. One possible solution would be to utilize the Internet, taking advantage its high-speed connections to provide smooth play. That's exactly the approach that **Domark** and **Interactive Creations, Inc.** have taken with their new multiplayer World War II flight simulator, CONFIRMED KILL.

Using the Internet allows a fast connection, but more exciting is the worldwide participation it allows. "We're looking at establishing a minimum of 500 players, and being able to provide them 10 updates a second," says Domark's Bryan Walker. "To do that, we're using a Sun SpareStation 1000, which is almost the top end of Sun's file servers."

In fact, the worldwide scope of the Internet means that CONFIRMED KILL players can relive historical match-ups that some might find uncomfortably realistic. Walker says they're hoping to get a Japanese squadron that's been flying in **Kesmai**'s AIR WARRIOR to give CONFIRMED KILL a try. "We're going try to get them involved in the Battle of Midway scenario," Walker says. "I'm not sure how politically correct it is to reopen old wounds, but I think they'll get a kick out of it."

Bringing players from around the world on-line, the game will not only allow competition against enemy fliers, but also competition for rank against friendly pilots. CONFIRMED KILL will reward proficient players by giving them command responsibilities. "Players who advance to certain levels—say they get 100 or 200 kills—will start getting additional benefits," says Walker. "They'll start being able to get a bigger picture, and they'll become commanders. They'll be able to direct the game's strategic strike assets, such as V-1 strikes and armor attacks."

With any multiplayer game, there are bound to be some times when you log on when there won't be many opponents around, thus the aforementioned strategic assets. Walker explains: "Holding territory is very important to the overall point structure of an arena game. One of the big things we're trying to do is always try to give the player something to do.

"In AIR WARRIOR, if you log on at two in the morning, you bomb airfields because there's nothing else to do. We want to create more for the players to do, which is where computer-controlled aircraft and tanks come in," Walker says. "We're trying to put as many things in as we can to keep players playing and to build a sense of community. Within three or four months after the game starts we're going to allow players to command their fleets." And if a player gets shot down, Walker says, he can jump back into the cockpit, or man an AA gun on the ship that rescues him.

A common problem for gamers involved in multiplayer campaigns is getting ganged up on: If you log on and there are only four guys flying for your country, and there are 31 flying for the enemy, you're in trouble. You'll still be in trouble if that happens in CONFIRMED KILL, but the payoff will keep it from being a frustrating situation. "We'll actually pay additional dividends [point modifiers] to pilots flying for countries that are losing in a campaign. If country A has 200 players flying for it and country B has 100 players flying for it, you're going to get a 2-1 modifier," explains Walker.

Domark and ICI have also addressed the problem of everyone flying only the best planes. "Each aircraft has a certain rating as far as combat ability goes. If you take your P-40 and you shoot down a Ta-152, you're going to get many more points than if that Ta-152 bagged you," Walker says. And AIR WARRIOR veterans will appreciate support for partial kills. "If ever again I fight a guy for ten minutes and he's down to five percent damage left, and some guy in a fresh plane comes and takes my kill from me, I'm going to puke," says Walker. "CONFIRMED KILL will split the credit between the two players who've done the majority of the damage."

THE SHAPE OF SIMS TO COME

NASCAR RACING and CONFIRMED KILL are on the leading edge of a wave of new multiplayer simulations that are going to redefine gaming for a lot of sim players. Once you've logged on and flown against opponents driven by grey matter instead of AI algorithms, you'll probably never get the same satisfaction from single-player simulations. Now if you'll excuse me, there's a Hawker Sea Fury with my name on it, and a few guys from California just waiting to be waxed.

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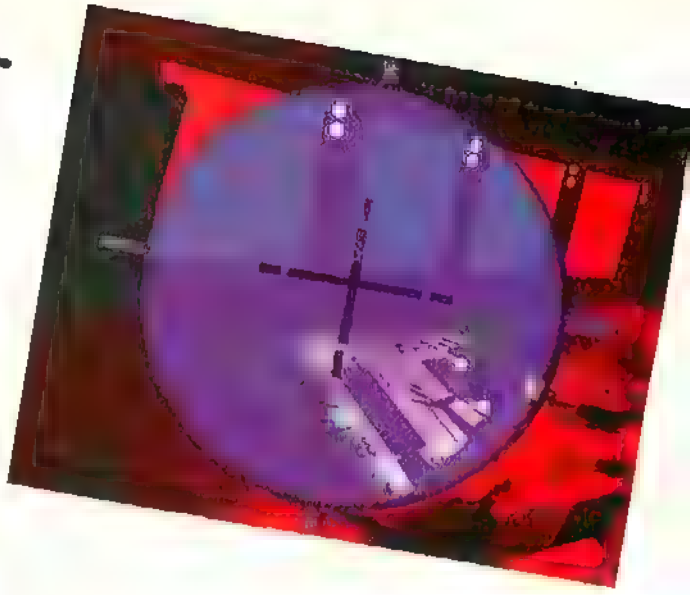

Mindscape's USS TICONDEROGA Packs A Powerful Punch, And A Glass Jaw

by Tim Carter

USS Ticonderoga: Life and Death on the High Seas

Price: $69.95
System Requirements: IBM compatible 486 or better, 8MB RAM, SVGA graphics, 15 MB hard drive space, double-speed CD-ROM, mouse; supports Sound Blaster-compatible sound cards.
Protection: None
Designers: Intelligent Games
Publisher: Mindscape
Novato, CA
(800) 234-3088

A GREAT SHIP IS DESIGNED TO COMBINE weapons, structure, electronics, engineering and a host of other factors into a complete package capable of performing several tasks effectively. That the Ticonderoga-class of cruisers turned out so well is a tribute to the ship's designers, who had those tasks clearly in mind when they began working for the US Navy.

A great game is no different, really. The designers must have a clear vision of the experience they are trying to create, as well as a rationale for why that experience will be enjoyable for the player. **Mindscape's** USS TICONDEROGA: LIFE AND DEATH ON THE HIGH SEAS seems to lack this central vision, as the designers never reach the lofty goals for which they strive.

WHAT KIND OF SHIP IS THIS?

USS TICONDEROGA is a difficult game to describe. While it is essentially a simulation of modern naval combat, it also has role-playing and strategy elements, and the feel of a graphic adventure. Nominally, you are the commander of a Ticonderoga-class (Aegis) missile cruiser, equipped with the most advanced naval radar tracking system in the world, your ship is a powerful naval combatant by itself. However, because of its ability to provide air defense for several vessels, the Ticonderoga generally operates as part of a task force. Often, your ship will be the focal point of the task force, coordinating aircraft strikes, combat air patrols, missile defenses, even anti-submarine operations.

The inevitable micro-management necessary in most naval simulations creates an immediate conflict between realism and enjoyable play. The captain of any ship, particularly one as complex as the Ticonderoga, would likely delegate many tasks (such as targeting anti-aircraft missiles) to subordinates. In USS TICONDEROGA, as in most simulations of this type, both macro and micro-management are patently unrealistic.

Of course, a fun game requires the willing suspension of disbelief. It is much more enjoyable, after all, to target and fire your own missiles; and the scenarios are much more interesting when commanding an entire fleet rather than a single (albeit powerful) ship. Besides, anyone fixated on realism will doubtless lose interest the moment they realize that the principle bad guys in the game are a resurgent Soviet Union and a belligerent (and apparently very foolish) North Korea.

A SERIOUS LIST TO STARBOARD

Sadly, however, there is no real need to quibble over such philosophical dilemmas: USS TICONDEROGA has enough concrete flaws for any critic. For starters, the game looks and feels more like a Myst knock-off than a military simulation. The interior of the ship is nicely drawn, and many of the graphics are quite attractive,

HARPOON IN HAND—FINALLY Once past the eye-candy, the combat screens will look familiar to HARPOON and AEGIS veterans—just stick to the hot keys.

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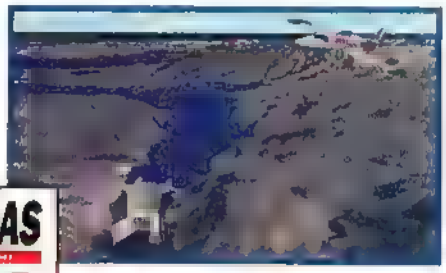

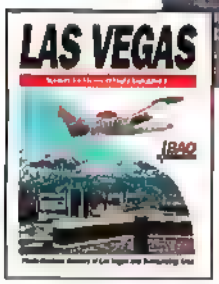

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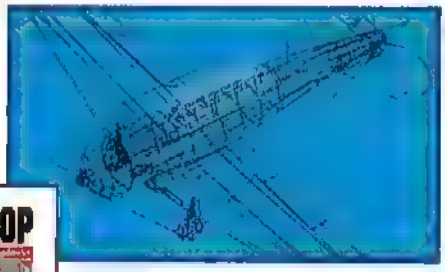

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but they have too little to do with the actual play of the game. In fact, I walked around the ship for some time before realizing that the hot keys are the best way to move between the various command screens, all of which are functional but rather plain. The high-resolution images of frozen crew members gives the ship a mystical, night-of-the-living-dead feel. This atmosphere is accentuated by the eerie soundtrack, which would be more at home in a murder mystery than aboard a floating arsenal. The result is a game that is actually better with the sound off and the graphics ignored, since these detract from gameplay more than they enhance it.

I AM AT EASE, SIR Although nicely rendered, a typical crew member has the mobility of a wax effigy.

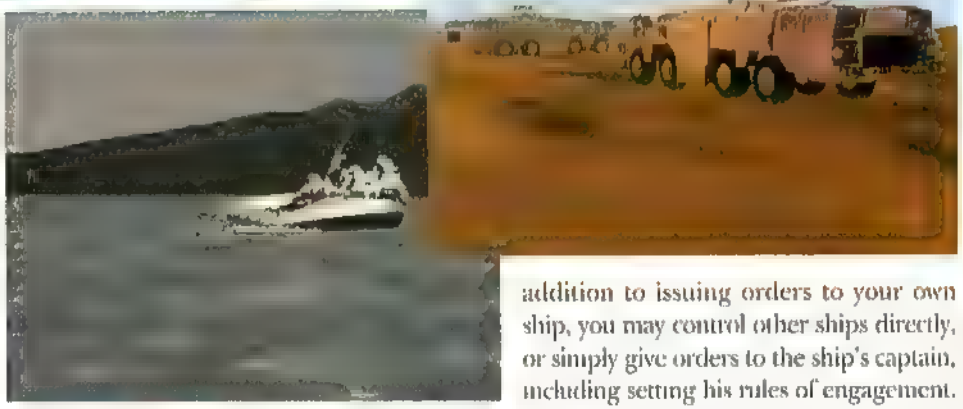
WHAT DOES THIS BUTTON DO?

A larger problem with USS TICONDEROGA is the truly appalling state of the game's documentation. Almost nothing is explained adequately. The manual is poorly organized, laden with jargon, and mostly useless. I was able to play the game due to my background knowledge, but gamers less familiar with naval tactics and modern ship platforms will find it extremely frustrating.

Some weapons systems and platforms are explained superficially, and many are missing altogether. Tactics and strategy are discussed at a general level, but there is almost no connection between the information provided (much of it highly technical) and actual gameplay. The information gap is not limited to the manual, as the mission objectives for many scenarios are sketchy and non-specific. The rules of engagement are often incorrect, or at least you aren't punished for flagrantly violating them.

Once the action begins, it is possible to justify the lack of information as part of the fog of war. But this explanation is of little comfort when you aren't even informed that your missiles have intercept ed their targets. Once, my own flagship was hit without any warning. I had no clue where the attack had come from, or even if it was a missile or a torpedo hit.

The lack of information extends to the scenarios as well. In one mission, you investigate an altercation between the Iranians and the Saudis in the Persian Gulf. Absolutely no information is given either in the briefing or during the scenario about who is whom. Both sides show up on radar as hostile, and unless you know that the Saudis are a lot more likely than the Iranians to be flying F-16s, there is no easy way to tell them apart. In this case the distinction was not all that important, however, as I was congratulated by HQ for cruising in circles near the scene of the action shooting at everything within range.



QUICK FLICKS GALORE Some of the more interesting cinematic cuts involve Scud missile launchers, exploding oil rigs, and terrorist acts.

DON'T ABANDON SHIP JUST YET

Underneath all of these problems, somewhat surprisingly, lies a creative game. The basic model used by USS TICONDEROGA to replicate modern naval combat, while by no means perfect, is interesting. Task forces must be properly managed and ships placed to take advantage of their respective abilities and weapons systems. Air and submarine operations are important in some scenarios, while others focus more on the unique abilities of the Ticonderoga itself.

The real game, though, lies in the command screens. You may view the situation and issue orders from a series of command screens divided by the type of platform, i.e. air, surface and subsurface. In addition to issuing orders to your own ship, you may control other ships directly, or simply give orders to the ship's captain, including setting his rules of engagement.

Computer captains tend towards counter-productive or wasteful decisions, however, and true efficiency requires that you exercise a high degree of hand-holding. Friendly aircraft in particular fare badly under computer control. Unless following specific orders, aircraft will meander all over the place, including enemy territory. As there is no "return to base" command, and as aircraft do not return on their own unless they are running low

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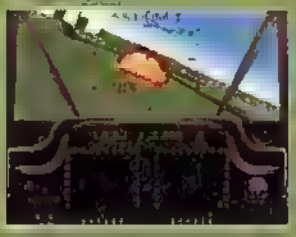

most gut-wrenching CD-ROM games, Interactive Magic. It will hurl you into the middle of unbelievable 3-D graphics. It's equipped with an incredible arsenal of weapons.

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on fuel, it is possible to lose an entire air force because the pilots went on a sightseeing tour in enemy airspace after completing their mission. The only way around this problem is to assign each unit new movement orders immediately after they have finished their primary mission—a time-consuming and rather tedious process.

Each scenario begins with a briefing from HQ, which may or may not provide concrete objectives and rules of engagement. While somewhat nebulous objectives are politically realistic, they do not work well in a game where the gamer is judged based on performance. Life isn't fair, but a computer game should be.

There are three theatres of operation open to aspiring admirals: the North Atlantic, the Persian Gulf and Korea. Each theatre has a series of scenarios connected by a storyline, and the scenarios must be played in order. The game has a role-playing element built into it, as command decisions will occasionally be required, often involving political issues. There is more than one moral dilemma here, and the messages add a surprising amount of tension and depth to an otherwise purely military simulation. This is one area where the creativity of the designers was put to good use. The role-playing aspects of the game introduce a lot more flexibility into the scenarios than would otherwise be possible, making for a much more unpredictable and enjoyable game.

Furthermore, the scenarios are not just simple shoot-em-ups: many include challenging political situations and problems, and they require innovative thinking and creative planning. However, the linear nature of the scenarios means that the game will be highly repetitive, even with the option for different decisions.

There are no levels of difficulty in the game, and no options or variants which can alter the scenarios. The only replayability comes through the role-playing aspects of the game. While this is interesting, it would have been a much stronger package had players also been provided with the ability to pick and choose which battles they wanted to refight.

AFTER ACTION REPORT

USS TICONDEROGA started with a decent design superstructure, but inappropriate graphics, poor documentation, and other odd structural flaws make this game more top-heavy than its celebrated real-life counterpart. While signs of a good simulation can be seen here and there, they are, for the most part, covered with the barnacles I've described. Unless Mindscape commits to a serious upgrade plan, the dry-dock will be TICONDEROGA's ultimate destination.

THE EDITORS SPEAK

USS TICONDEROGA

RATING

PROS Clever scenarios with challenging political and moral dilemmas make for nice bits of role-playing. Task force model is very good.

CONS The pretty graphics don't add anything, and the soundtrack is bizarre. Hard to get data out of the design, and the poor docs don't help.

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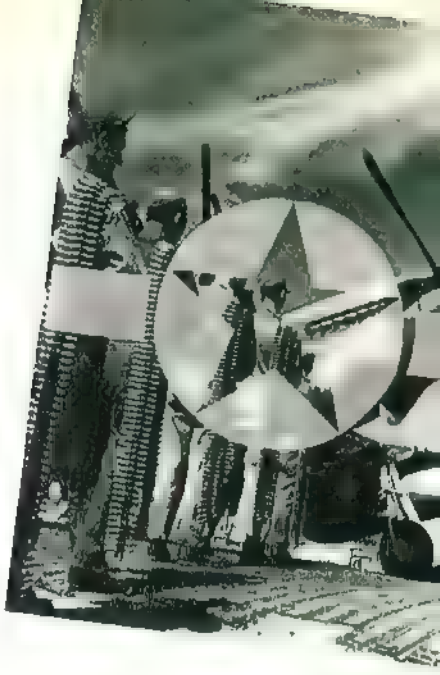
Pretty Birds And Plane Truth



D-DAY: OPERATION OVERLORD Looks As Good—And Flies Even Better—Than The Real Thing

by Jeff James

ASK MOST HISTORIANS ABOUT THE ORIGINS OF WORLD WAR II AND THEY'LL POINT YOU DOWN THE road that leads to World War I. Many scholars are of the opinion that the bitter close of the first war—which gave birth to the harsh Treaty of Versailles and a badly bruised Germanic ego—was a major factor in the rise of Nazi Germany. Similarly, when you look at the lineage of the weapons used in WWII—tanks, mechanized infantry and combat aircraft—you find that their roots go back to protean ancestors that plodded across the bloody battlefields of France in 1918.

With that in mind, it's fitting that **Rowan Software** and **Virgin Interactive**'s new WWII air combat release, D-DAY: OPERATION OVERLORD (OVERLORD), found its genesis in Rowan's DAWN PATROL, a WWI simulator released late last year. The DAWN PATROL system, which offered beautiful WWI aircraft flying through Super VGA skies, has been enhanced and adapted to the demands of the second World War.

D-DAY: OPERATION OVERLORD

Price: $39.95 - $49.95, CD-ROM
System Requirements: IBM compatible 386/40Mhz or faster, 4 MB RAM, VGA graphics (SVGA preferable), 7MB hard drive space; supports AdLib and Sound Blaster-compatible sound card.
Protection: None
Developer: Rowan Software
Publisher: Virgin Interactive
Irvine, CA
(800) 874-4607

INTRODUCING THE OVERLORD

True to its name, OVERLORD focuses exclusively on the allied air forces which flew over the skies of Normandy before, during and after the D-Day invasion of June 6th, 1944. Based in Tangmere airfield in England, your squadron takes to the skies in one of three legendary aircraft—the P-51B Mustang, the Spitfire IX or the Typhoon 1B—to help clear the land, air and sea of German forces. Two mission types are offered: for a quick boot into the cockpit and instant action, a "scramble" option allows you to start shooting right away; for lengthier play, a campaign-like mission mode gives you the opportunity to participate in a series of loosely connected combat missions over the course of several weeks of game time.

The campaign mode will be familiar to gamers who have chased the Kilrathi through space in **Origin**'s WING COMMANDER series. You begin with an overhead view of Tangmere station. To travel to your barracks, you simply point at your humble abode and click the mouse button. In this fashion you make your way through the mission briefings, plane selection and other game operations. You should expect the unexpected, even here: on a number of occasions several German bombers appeared over the airfield, and I was offered one of two options: I could be courageous and race towards my plane in an attempt to take to the skies and shoot the Gerry bombers down, or I could turn tail and dive into the nearest foxhole.

Once you finally get into the air, you'll gaze in awe at the game's incredible graphics, particularly in SVGA mode. Planes are crisp and detailed, complete with textures sporting insignia, exhaust stains and various other signs of wartime markings and wear. The landscape shows the same attention to detail. Rowan reportedly used actual reconnaissance footage from the Normandy invasion to get the graphics as accurate as possible, and they succeeded admirably. Instead of the blocky, nondescript structures featured in other products in the genre, OVERLORD boasts detailed units strongly resembling their real-world counterparts. Coastal batteries bristle with anti-aircraft gun emplacements, and V-1 buzzbomb sites are marked by the sloped ramps which were used to launch them. Most of the terrain is nicely colored and textured.

The most amazing thing about the graphics is the smooth frame rate, even in SVGA. On a 486DX2/66 with 8MB of RAM and a 1MB local bus video card, the game played smoothly in both SVGA and VGA. Indeed, the smooth frame rate, high resolution and crisp graphics put OVERLORD a visual generation beyond most of the other flight sims. OVERLORD runs more smoothly in 640x480 SVGA resolution

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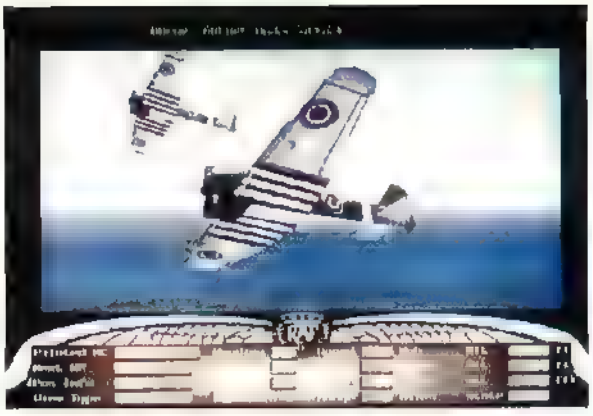
than many of its competitors, including **Electronic Arts'** beautiful but system hogging U.S. NAVY FIGHTERS. Unfortunately, Rowan seems to have lavished all their efforts on the graphics alone.

During my flight time with each of the game's aircraft, I noticed that they featured startlingly robust performance characteristics, in both "normal" and "super" flight modes. Even with a full bomb load, external fuel tanks and a belly full of petrol, the Mustang modeled in OVERLORD devours altitude like an unloaded F-16 at full afterburner. All three planes performed feats of acrobatics that the actual pilots who flew these planes could scarcely imagine. In one flight session, I proceeded to hammer the control stick in all directions, trying to induce a fatal spin, an unrecoverable stall, or some other catastrophic condition. Despite my best efforts to the contrary, all three planes defied the laws of aerodynamics and kept happily airborne.

This overly generous flight model can be a blessing or a curse, depending on your game preferences. If you're a novice gamer looking for a fun, easy-to-fly flight sim with an emphasis on arcade action and stunning visuals, OVERLORD definitely fits the bill. Even the most ham-fisted flight simulator newbie can take to the skies in the blink of an eye, chewing up ground targets and splashing Messerschmitts with regularity. Of course, if you count yourself among those who demand the utmost in Detail and Realism in your sims, you'd be better served by another game.



RAPTOR RAPTURE Few aircraft in any flight simulation look as good as those in OVERLORD, and the frame rate is faster than comparably detailed sims, even in high resolution.

MOVING PICTURES

Faulty flight models aside, OVERLORD boasts a number of value-added features. The film editing function is fully featured, allowing gamers to select the best of their aerial exploits and record them. Although not as easy to use as the film editing capabilities employed in **Dynamix'** ACES OVER... series, the video editing functions are surprisingly robust.

Another laudable feature is the combat lock option, which is similar in many respects to the padlock view in **Spectrum HoloByte's** FALCON 3.0. As soon as the combat lock view is activated, your viewpoint will lock onto the nearest target and smoothly follow it, as if you were actually turning your head in the cockpit to follow the path of the enemy plane. I found OVERLORD's combat lock to be much easier to use and more intuitive than the padlock view in FALCON 3.0. The usefulness of the combat lock mode can be partially attributed to the visual elements used to help orient the player. Each side of the cockpit is given a unique graphic treatment: the front of the cockpit features a gunsight, while shaded markings to the left and right sides help simulate a cockpit canopy, providing an excellent frame of reference.

TORCH AND GO A Typhoon—the principal air-to-ground attack aircraft of WWII—earns its stripes by softening up German coastal facilities.

ALTITUDE LOSS

American gamers hoping to skim the hedgerows of Normandy in American aircraft are bound to be disappointed with the paucity of plane types available. OVERLORD is first and foremost a simulation of the Royal Air Force during the Normandy invasion, so only a select few planes are available. Even such memorable British craft as the DeHaviland Mosquito are conspicuously absent. And while the simplistic flight model and controls suggest that OVERLORD is targeted at entry-level sim buffs, the instruction manual lacks much of even the most rudimentary game information.

But the greatest challenge of all may be getting OVERLORD to run on your system. To run in SVGA mode you need a whopping 622K of conventional memory. In this age of 32-bit protected-mode programming, OVERLORD's massive RAM requirements seem excessive

ACES AND AMATEURS

When weighing the strengths and weaknesses of OVERLORD, it's obvious that **MicroProse's** 1942: PACIFIC AIR WAR and Dynamix' ACES OVER... games shouldn't fear losing their supremacy of the WWII sim skies. Like DAWN PATROL, OVERLORD is an intriguing mixture of stunning positives and embarrassing negatives. Admittedly, OVERLORD is a product aimed at the casual flight sim buff; if you're an aeronaut who prefers rapid-fire action over accurate simulation in your gaming products, OVERLORD shouldn't disappoint. The others have probably already flown off in search of better target opportunities.

THE EDITORS SPEAK

D-DAY: OPERATION OVERLORD

RATING 3.5

PROS Gorgeous SVGA graphics, plentiful viewing angles, and excellent dog-fighting make this a good game for novices.

CONS Unrealistic flight models, extreme RAM requirements in SVGA mode, limited numbers of aircraft, and a poor manual will keep serious sim buffs grounded from the start.

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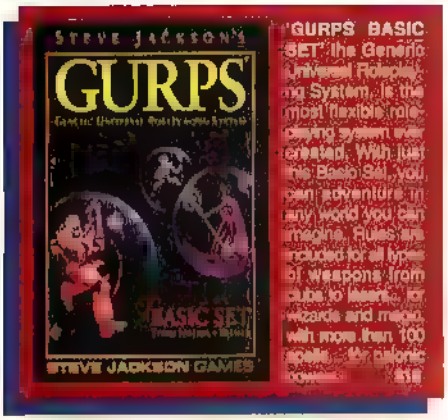

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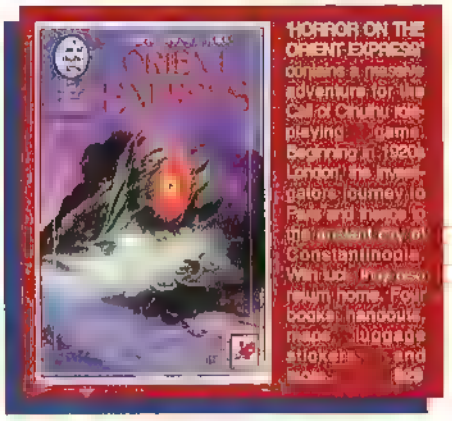
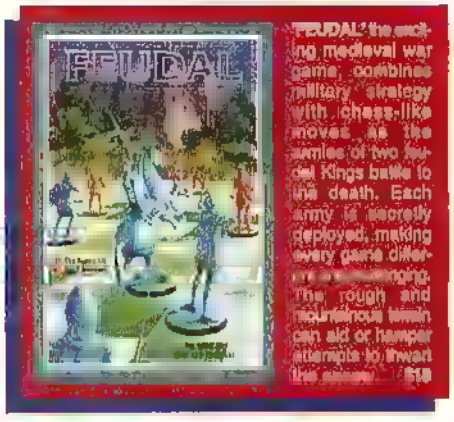


'HORROR ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS' contains a massive adventure for the Call of Cthulhu role-playing game. Beginning in 1920s London, the investigators journey to Paris and thence to the [illegible] of Constantinople. Wanted by [illegible] return home. Four books, handouts, maps, luggage stickers and [illegible]



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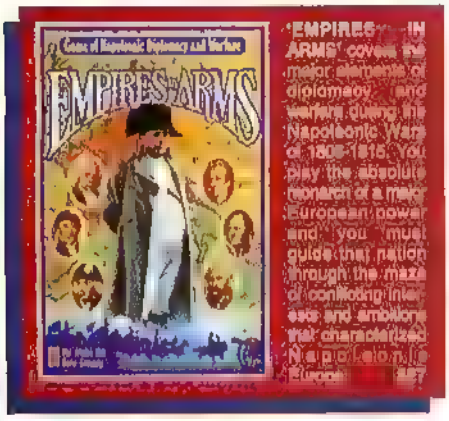
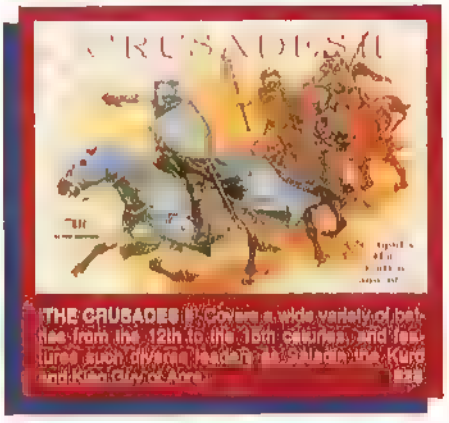
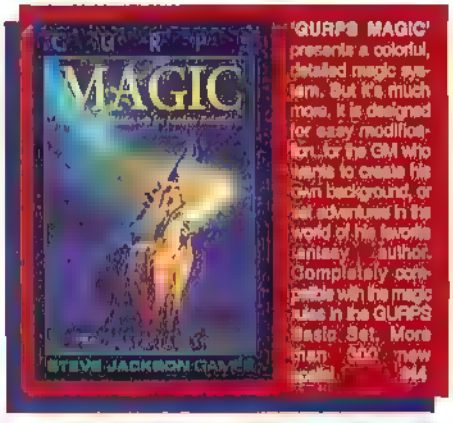


'EMPIRES IN ARMS' covers the major elements of diplomacy and warfare during the Napoleonic Wars of 1805-1815. You play the absolute monarch of a major European power and you must guide that nation through the maze of conflicting interests and ambitions that characterized [illegible]



THE CRUSADES! Covers a wide variety of battles from the 12th to the 15th centuries, and features such diverse leaders as [illegible] Richard the Lion-Hearted, Kurd [illegible]



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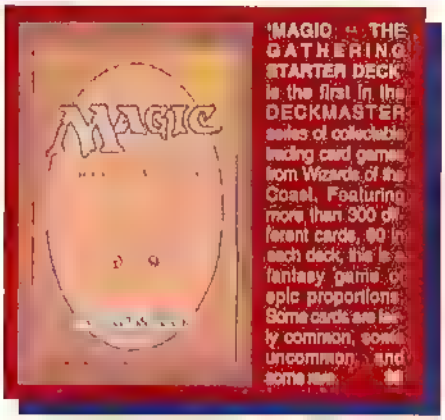

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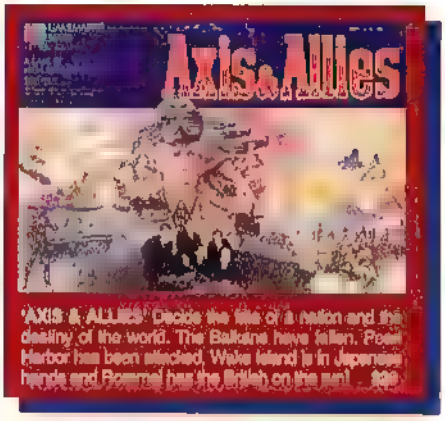

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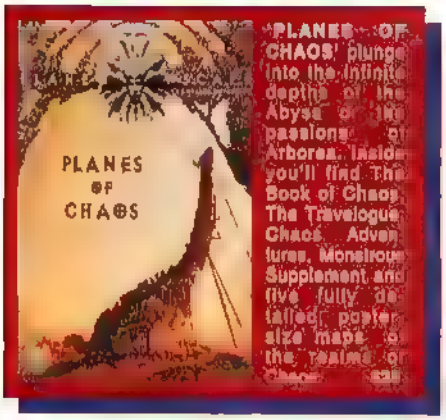

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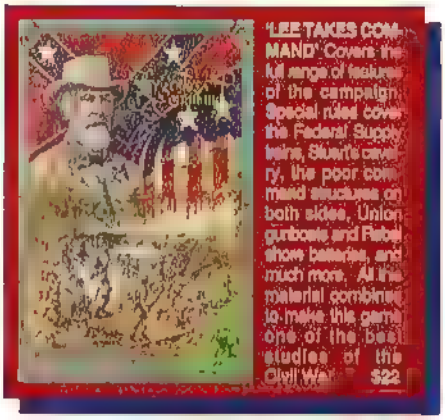

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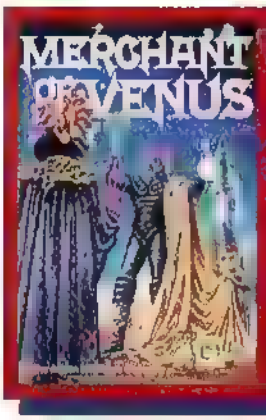

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Dealing With The Fog Of War

TACTICAL-SCALE WARGAMES AND I HAVE HAD PROBLEMS. YOU SEE, I HAVE A DIFFICULT TIME ACCEPTING a game scale where each player's turn, representing between six seconds and six minutes, actually takes 15 or 20 minutes to conduct. Much of the tension and excitement of this nitty-gritty, in-your-face game scale is lost when players have a half hour to make a decision that, in reality, would be made in half a minute. The obvious alternative is real-time play, but I fear that option runs the risk of turning a thoughtful military exercise into an arcade game.

My other reservation about tactical-level wargames concerns the maps. The maps provide a representation of the hills, streams, buildings, walls, etc. that make up a tactical-level battlefield; and that is, after all, a map's job. But I don't like having a God's-eye view of the situation. This is where my disbelief has trouble being suspended.

Let say, for example, that I'm leading a squad of German soldiers against a similar group of Russians in the city of Stalingrad. It is likely that I, *Feldwebel* (Sergeant) Emrich, would have some information regarding the major routes into and through the city, but I certainly would not know what kind of buildings, parks, fields, or other terrain I might find. The maps used during WWII were often reprinted *Michelin Guides*, for goodness' sake! Even if I were leading the Russians, Comrade Emrich certainly wouldn't know his way around this city when his home town was several hundred miles away at Gorki! Yet, I have only to look at the typical computer game map to know that my squad of foot soldiers will find exactly the terrain they seek at the extreme limit of their movement this turn, just up the block and around the corner. And I hate that. The intelligence provided by a God's-eye view map is just too good to get me into the right tactical *feel* of such a simulation.

While it's one thing for a wargamer like me to wave his arms and say "Where's the chaos? Where's the fog of war?!," it's another matter entirely to simulate it. But I'm here to tell you that it *can* be done, and *has* been done, but not in any computer game that I've played.

A CARD GAME SHOWS HOW LESS INFORMATION MAKES FOR BETTER WARGAMES

by Alan Emrich

G-2

*** Wargamers who've explored the world of collectable card games may have picked up a deck or two of Columbia Games' DIXIE. Their Shiloh sequel is due out in the second quarter of this year, with EAGLES (their Napoleonic card game) due in the last quarter of this year. Next year portends a Gettysburg entry into their Civil War series (with 600 new cards!) and a "Rommel in the Desert" card game.**

*** Scott Hamilton is looking for a few good artists. He needs French and North African landscapes and vehicle paint schemes for PANTHERS IN THE SHADOWS, his West Front sequel to TIGERS ON THE PROWL. For details, call HPS Simulations at (408) 554-8381.**

*** FIFTH FLEET fans will be glad to hear that an expansion scenario disk for Avalon Hill's naval wargame is at the ship yard and scheduled for christening this summer. SEVENTH FLEET should set sail for silicon seas in the latter half of '95.**

*** Australian Design Group, a board game publisher, has announced**

(continued on page 154)

I've had to go to the board game side of things to find what I'm looking for. **Avalon Hill**'s *Up Front*, published in 1982, is a card game that has the kind of tense, feet-on-the-ground, *oh-hell-what-am-I-doing-here?* kind of realism that I would hope to find in a detailed wargame on a tactical scale. Since I haven't had this experience in a computer wargame, I thought I would let our electronic community know what it's like.

In *Up Front*, squads are broken up into two or more groups of two or more soldiers each. Each group maneuvers and fires as a single unit. The cards in your hand come in several varieties: move, fire, rally, concealment, smoke, terrain, etc. The cards in your hand simulate the opportunities that your squad presently has available to it. For example, if you have plenty of movement cards, but no terrain in your hand, the lads are ready to go, even if they're not sure where they'll end up. Conversely, having terrain cards (hills, gullies, brush, etc.) in your hand and no movement cards to get there reflects those times when you have a good vantage point and can see several places to maneuver to, but the opportunity to move out hasn't presented itself for any number of reasons (enemy interdiction, lack of troop motivation at the moment, orders moving slowly between the men, etc.).

The art of maneuver in *Up Front* requires that a group has a movement card in hand to play. Having a terrain card ready for the next turn means that your guys know where they're going, a concealment card helps them avoid casualties while moving, and a rally card is nice to have just in case anyone is pinned *en route*. The exhilarating tension comes from rarely having all of these cards together in your hand at the same time. Often, it's necessary to move toward enemy lines without the comfort of knowing just what cover is available beyond the clump of woods ahead.

Computer wargames do a fine job of handling hidden movement and line-of-sight, so why can't they also let gamers probe and maneuver in unknown landscapes like *Up Front* does? There's no good reason why information on the tactical battlefield can't be limited to the present position's point-of-view. That way, this pulse-pounding, ballsy element of maneuver on a tactical battlefield can become more real than simulated.

G2 *(continued from page 153)*

that their WORLD IN FLAMES game will be brought to the computer by the end of this year. WWII aficionados take heed: WORLD IN FLAMES is the definitive simulation of the entire war, covering every area of the world in which it was fought, and it's a natural for translation to the computer.

* The WARLORDS saga continues with WARLORDS II DELUXE, probably out by the Fall of this year. The scuttlebutt is that we might see 256-color, network (turn-based) game play, and enhanced scenarios (60 of 'em, including the original 30 from Warlords II and the scenario builder). This version will be backwards-compatible with other WARLORDS II SCENARIO BUILDER scenarios and should be CD-ROM only.

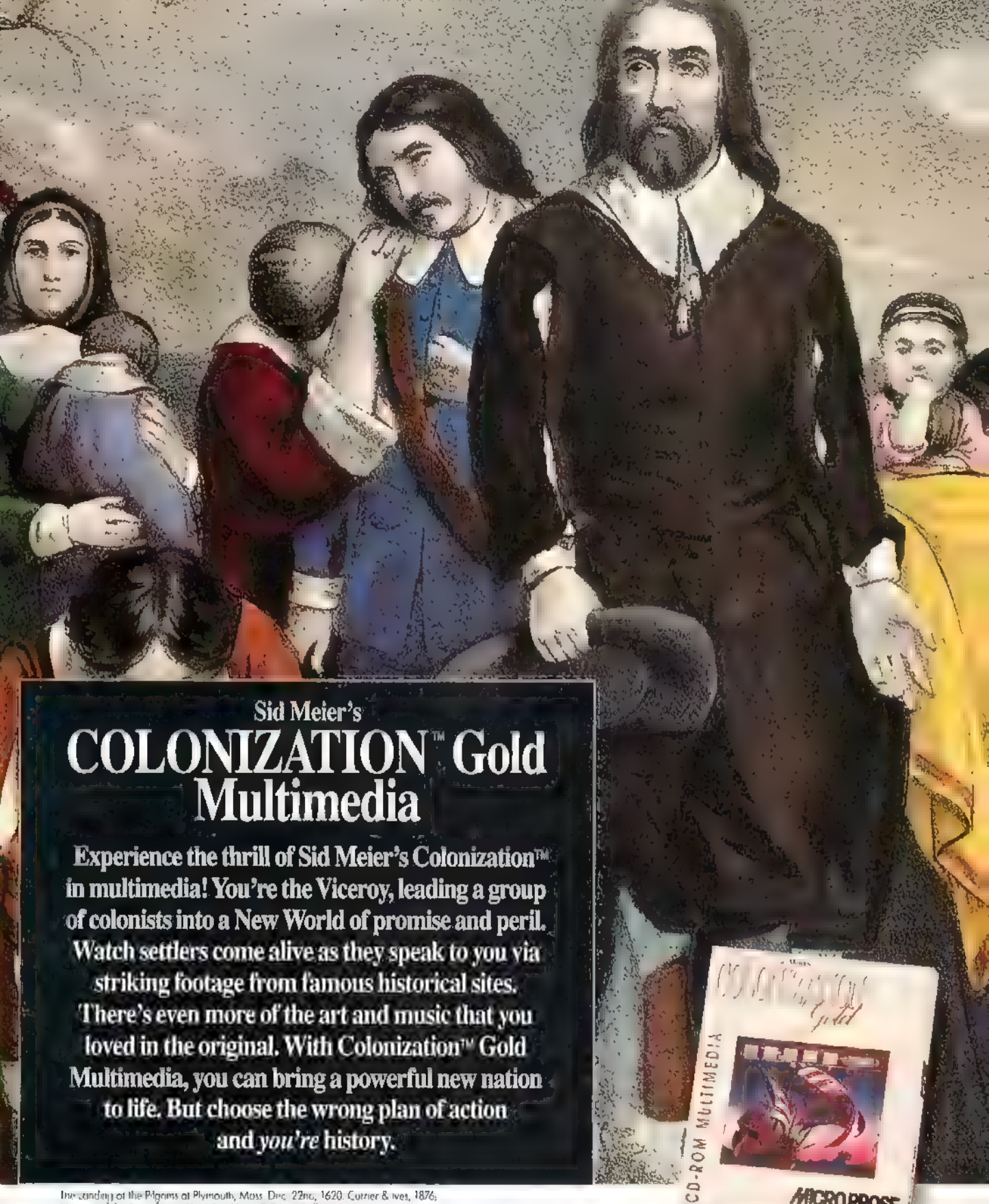
* Speaking of WARLORDS II scenarios, our creative gamer of the month award goes to Perry Wood. Perry has designed two interesting ancient Roman scenarios for WARLORDS II: "Severus—Britain 196 AD", featuring Severus, Albinus, Legio VI, Maetae, Caledonii, Saxons, Ulaid, and Mamu, and "Who Will Be Caesar?", a 44 BC post-assassination scenario starring Octavian, Antony, M. Brutus, D. Brutus, Cleopatra, Lepidus, Sextus Pompey, and those wild and crazy Germans. You can find these scenarios on the CompuServe Gamer's Forum in the Wargames library.

* Keith Zabaloui at Atomic Games reports that BEYOND SQUAD LEADER is in alpha testing. Interestingly, Apple Computer has taken a "special interest" in the project. Atomic and a handful of other software developers were recently invited to a special hands-on workshop during which Apple programmers worked with them to improve the performance of the PowerPC versions of their products. Keith reports that, in Atomic's case, Apple managed to quadruple the speed of their graphics.

* Although Jim Rose has left Avalon Hill, he has not left gaming. Jim's new company, TalonSoft, should be releasing its first game in a new series, BATTLEGROUND: ARDENNES, later this year. This series will feature WWII platoon/company level action at 250 meters per hex (e.g., PANZERBLITZ scale). They will be Windows-based, CD-ROM only products with about 15 to 20 scenarios from each campaign. The series is aiming for a PANZER GENERAL-like balance between hard-core, historical wargames and more casual strategy games, and will feature plenty of video and sound. A second series at this same scale on the Civil War is slated for next year.

* Speaking of TalonSoft, they're looking for good programming/development teams. For more information call Jim Rose at (410) 821-7282.

* MicroProse's MACHIAVELLI: THE PRINCE, released at press time, is a remake of QQP's MERCHANT PRINCE. The MicroProse version is supposed to have: improved graphics and sound, warehousing of goods, variable demand levels, "Wait" orders on trade routes so that full cargoes set sail, more emphasis on politics and the Church, and smarter computer opponents.



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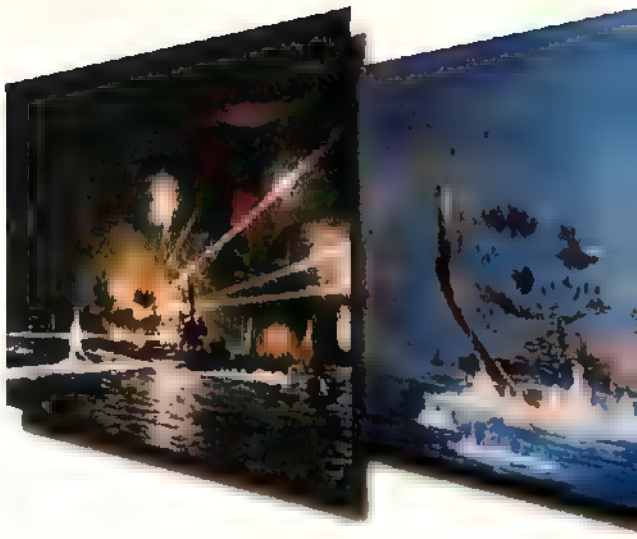


SSI Once Again Sails Into Harm's Way With Great Naval Battles 3

by Bob Proctor

GREAT NAVAL BATTLES, VOLUME 3: FURY IN THE PACIFIC (GNB3) IS THE LATEST GAME IN SSI's *Advanced Simulator Series*. It is labeled a "simulation," and while it does fulfill some of the expectations commonly raised by that label, it isn't purely so. GNB3 offers the first-person perspective one expects from a simulator, but its 16 scenarios recreate the epic struggles of the US and the Imperial Japanese navies during WWII from a more fleet-oriented perspective, which gives it a traditional wargame feel.

Of course, when I see "simulation" on a game box, I have expectations of accurate details and realistic game systems. GNB3 is obviously based on very solid research, since the data on ships, guns, and planes is generally very accurate. One might have quibbles with various sub-systems, but some of these can be fixed with the customizing features built into the game. I also fear that a naval "simulation," may be difficult to play because of the enormous amount of detail, but making detail accessible and manageable is an area in which GNB3 excels.

Great Naval Battles, Vol. III: Fury in The Pacific

Price: $69.95
System Requirements: IBM compatible 386/33 (486/33 recommended), 4 MB RAM, SVGA graphics, 14 MB hard drive space, CD-ROM; supports Aria, Soundman Wave, Wave Blaster, and Sound Blaster-compatible sound cards.
Protection: None
Developer: Divide By Zero Software
Publisher: Strategic Simulations Inc.
Sunnyvale, CA
(408) 737-6800

SOME SALTY PHILOSOPHY

Naval warfare has always presented a challenge for game designers. Wargamers want to see the broad picture of ships and aircraft groping for each other over hundreds of miles of ocean, and then, once battle is joined, follow the action in excruciating detail. These contradictory desires have caused many a potentially good design to collapse from a split personality disorder. Despite a game's huge scale, time must speed up so that days or weeks of searching are compressed into a few minutes of game time. The design must also accurately track the speedy trajectories of shells and bombs, yet paradoxically slow time down so that we gamers, who so easily reach sensory overload, can follow the path of the critical shell or torpedo from tube to explosion.

From the beginning, boardgame design adopted two scales, the search map and the battle map, but severe compromises were still needed, especially when aircraft were present. Their higher speeds create several problems: either they move twice the width of the map every turn, or else you use much shorter turns and the ships seem to crawl around the map. More levels were obviously needed, but integrating them was a major problem until the computer came along, and GNB3 is a perfect example of how to do this. It tracks position, course, speed and damage for all bases, ships and planes, allowing us to simulate more objects with less effort (to have individual torpedoes, say, instead of abstracting them into a combat results table) and allows the user to make each turn a much smaller time slice. GNB3 simulates everything at the most detailed level and presents information at whatever higher level you choose.

Realizing that the simulation aspects are only a part of the complete game, GNB3 presents tremendous amounts of data to the player without becoming overwhelming. The computer's ability to portray the "fog of war" so essential to naval conflict enables us to recreate naval battles with a more authentic feel than boardgames or miniatures. Oddly enough, in GNB3 the exact composition of each task force is known as soon as it is found, which may annoy those used to the erratic reporting tendencies of search planes in SSG's CARRIERS AT WAR.

SMOKE ON THE HORIZON

So, the simulation value of GNB3 is good and should only get better after minor bugs are fixed. But what will appeal to

War Gaming will never be the same!

BATTLEGROUND: ARDENNES

VOL I

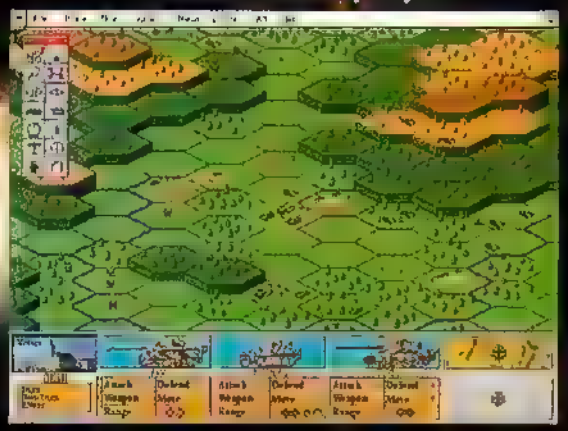
Meet Fritz:

His Panther, and 40 more like him just rolled across the Meuse river and he's heading right for you. Can you stop him?

BATTLEGROUND: ARDENNES™ puts you square in the middle of the last major German ground offensive of WWII, known as the Battle of the Bulge. In this first volume of the BATTLEGROUND series, the ground breaking BATTLEVIEW™ graphics let you fight it out in exciting Platoon / Company level engagements deep in the Ardennes forest.

Make your stand at Bastogne as the 101st Airborne or ride to victory with Piper's infamous SS units.

Actual screens may vary



COMING SUMMER 95

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Ground breaking BATTLEVIEW™ Graphics

even casual wargamers are the outstanding graphics and excellent interface. From the Lookout Station, where the view fills the upper 40% of the screen, you can watch the entire battle—the flash of gunfire, the planes, the flak and smoke. At night, you can even watch the flight of the shells, falling to either explode on a target or raise a white column of water nearby! The water, sky, and land are done well enough to not distract from the credibility of the scene. The sea, though flat, sparkles when the sun is out and turns gray when it isn't. The land is all a nondescript grayish-green but at least it looks like land.

BLUE SKY BLUE GNB3 lets you view your battlewagon from topside or torpedo-level, against either sunny or stormy backgrounds.

Ship silhouettes and deck plans are very detailed and look right when seen from any angle or distance. The graphics routines are very well polished and don't seem to leave any ghosts or mysterious objects that so many animations do. The worst thing I can say is that the burning ship animation does not always match the deck height of a particular class. This is praising by faint damnation, indeed. A few of the ship silhouettes are not correct, but use that of a similar class. I suspect this was done to reduce the number of graphics files needed.

There are several subsystems in the game that don't seem quite right. Too many torpedoes are duds, for example, but this can be corrected on the Weapons Customizer screen. If you let the computer handle your gunnery control, there is a good chance it will expend all of the AP ammunition at extreme range and do very little damage. Too many B-17s get shot down by CAP (19 out of 19 on one famous raid) and this can't be changed, but the results of more conventional attacks with dive and torpedo bombers seem pretty good.

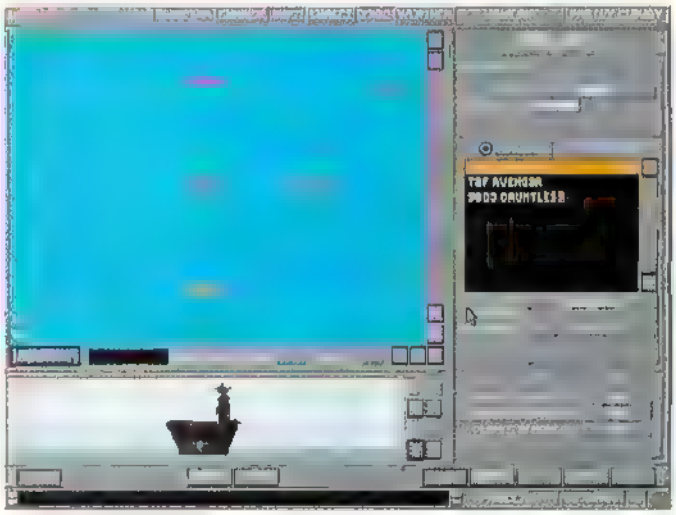
SHAKEDOWN CRUISE

To manage all of the action, you must become familiar with eight stations besides that of the Lookout. The Bridge and the Flagbridge are very similar: the Bridge controls a single ship, while the Flagbridge controls an entire task force. The largest part of the screen here is devoted to an overhead map view which zooms from about 2,000 miles across down to where you can see ship deckplans, turrets...why, you can practically see men running around on deck! Other parts of the screen summarize course and speed, orders, gunnery or air operations. You switch between them at the click of a button, and you can stop the clock at any time.

At their most incremental, the turns appear to be one second each. Where else can you play a three month operation in one second turns? Time management is done by using four clock speeds. In addition to this control, there is a "super fast" mode (one minute turns) that kicks in automatically when there is no contact with the enemy. When you go to the lookout station, however, you should use speed one no matter what type of computer you have. To go faster is to skip frames in the animation and spoil the effect.

In addition to the Bridge and the Flag Bridge, there are six secondary control stations: Main Guns, Secondary Guns, Torpedo, Air Operations, Damage Control, and Submarine Operations. Of these, only Main Guns, Torpedo and Damage are used in most scenarios. Only battleships have secondary guns (anti-aircraft fire is abstract for all vessels), only DD's and some cruisers have torpedo mounts, and only the larger scenarios have submarines. You assign subs to patrol by sectors and they can give you precious information about the movement of enemy task forces. Maybe they can even sink a ship on occasion, but I haven't ever been so lucky.

The 16 scenarios provide lots of variety. There are carrier battles (Coral Sea, Midway, Philippine Sea) and gunnery duels (Komandorski Islands, Surigao Strait). Five are night actions in the Solomons, small affairs with less than a dozen ships per side. Five more are huge battles covering days or weeks and involving well over a hundred ships. The sixteenth scenario can't be categorized. It is the strange battle in Leyte Gulf between CVEs and DDs and the main Japanese battle force—great fun if you like shooting up destroyers with the Yamato. Three of the larger battles are hypothetical and three are historical. These are Philippine Sea, Leyte Gulf and Operation Cartwheel (the US effort to secure the Solomons in



PRETTY SHIPS ALL IN A ROW Zooming in lets you see your task force in tabletop miniatures style, while still keeping track of CAP and Nav data.

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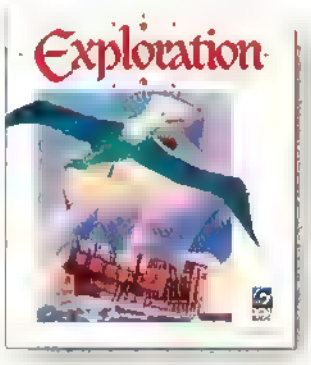

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late 1943) are mini-campaigns.

Using the scenario editor, you can modify existing scenarios or build your own. There is no way to modify data for ships or planes, which is too bad since there is only one version of each. Most ships are shown "as built," even the battleships sunk at Pearl Harbor. These are correct for the scenarios that depict the fleet engagement that might have happened had the Pearl Harbor attack failed, but nowhere else. Again, maybe an expansion disk will bring modifications. The editor is not as slick as the game itself—it will frustrate you if you try to exert too much control over ship position, for example—but it adds depth to the package.

AFTER-ACTION REPORT

In its current state, GNB3 works best for gunnery duels. In particular, the night battles in the Solomons are interesting for either side. ACTION STATIONS fans should enjoy the great interface and graphics GNB3 provides. Those disappointed by GNB2 will appreciate the improvements in carrier operations, but these are still not as smooth as they should be due to some infrequent bugs (remember to save often as you try to conquer New Georgia). The editor also seems to run out of memory with really large scenarios. Other problems include planes that get frozen in time and stop moving, ships with incorrect speeds, and bombers that, once sent on search missions, can't be switched back to attack mode. SSI has promised a patch, so hopefully by the time you read this...

Even with the bugs fixed, GNB3 won't be as interesting as CARRIERS AT WAR, because GNB3 is somewhat predictable. Task forces always start in the same positions and follow the same strategies, which, combined with the always-accurate sighting reports, leave no doubt as to where enemy vessels are or what they're doing. Using the random scenario generator will solve this, but then you aren't playing historical situations any more. A more unpredictable AI would be nice—modem or network play against a human opponent even better.

When it comes to analyzing the seaworthiness of GNB3, one must approach the task with caution. Seen from the port side, GNB3 is a fantastic accomplishment, as it provides the best sensation of being on the bridge of any game yet. Seen from starboard, there are the aforementioned limitations and bugs. Old naval gaming salts will find a fair share of great gaming on these seas, but with an equal share of rough waters.

THE EDITORS SPEAK

GREAT NAVAL BATTLES 3

RATING 3.5

PROS GNB3 provides a real sense of being on the bridge, with accurate ship-to-ship gunnery combat. Great graphics, good interface can make even the saltiest sailor want to set sail.

CONS Carrier battles still don't integrate as well as they should for WWII Pacific naval action. Predictable AI, annoying bugs, and no two-player mode leave this game behind the CARRIERS AT WAR series in the race for naval supremacy.

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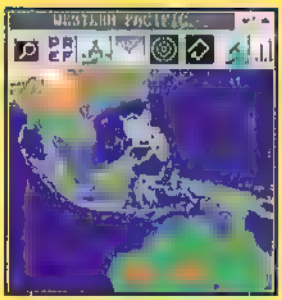

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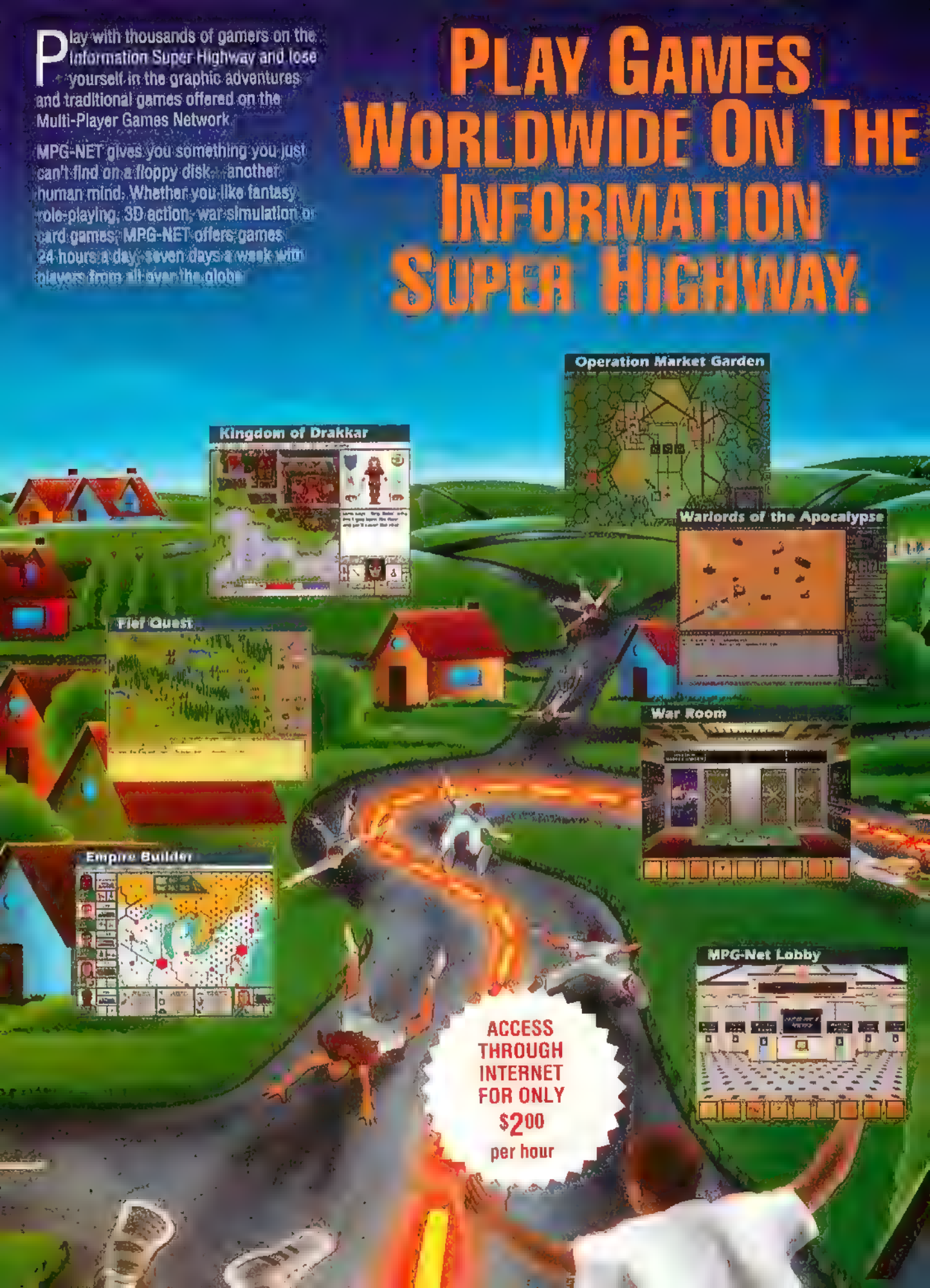

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The Speedy General

How To Use Combined Arms And Mobility To Overrun Opponents In SSI's PANZER GENERAL

by Tim Carter

Discussions of strategy frequently focus on the physical: the nature of the units, the scenario objectives, the vagaries of the map. Many would-be Rommels in PANZER GENERAL focus largely on air power and sweeping tank attacks deep into the enemy rear, while infantry and other support units mop up bypassed enemy defenders. There is, however, an alternative path to victory.

At its roots, PANZER GENERAL is a game of combined arms. Essentially, combined arms can be defined as "the use of multiple units to achieve better results than can be obtained by using units separately." The real tension in the game comes from the need to make a variety of units work together under pressure from both time and distance. Forming a mobile, efficient strike force is the key to winning.

To this end, I suggest two fundamental rules of planning: 1) Don't rely on air power for anything; 2) Never send the bulk of your armor ahead of supporting units. The trick here is not to slow down the tanks, but to speed up everything else.

ARTILLERY GENERAL

Before planning your *blitzkrieg*, it is important to have the right forces. Anti-aircraft and anti-tank units are not as versatile or important as the basic infantry-armor-artillery-aircraft mix, and can safely be either left out or minimized when on the offensive. For defensive scenarios, though, AA and AT weapons are a must.

Artillery is the single most important unit type in the game. It is the only all-weather unit that can reduce cities and fortified positions, and unlock the defensive combinations of your opponent (either AI or human). Don't skimp on artillery, and don't throw your units away. Buy the heaviest possible cannon and mount them on half-tracks. Self-propelled artillery units have better defensive values and are quite mobile, but they are also expensive, especially given their fuel and ammo restrictions.

Despite its title, PANZER GENERAL rewards players who know how to use infantry properly. All infantry should be riding in half-tracks, and if possible should be either bridge engineers or Pioneers to prevent rugged defense. Bridging engineers, by the way, are vital to success because of their ability to negate rivers. If you don't use them, you risk moving too slowly.

Tanks should not be ignored or overemphasized. Armor is well-suited to rapid advances into open space, attacking supporting units behind cities, and generally protecting infantry and artillery from counter-attacks. Of course, any veteran Panzer General knows that infantry should be used against anti-tank guns, tanks against exposed soft targets and so forth. I will also assume that readers know to soften up enemy positions by taking out artillery and anti-aircraft guns first.

Keep in mind that different strategies and player personalities allow for some variety in force composition. Regardless, if some of your forces are regularly left waiting for the rest of your army, you need to alter your mix. In particular, if you are waiting for your heavy guns to catch up, buy more artillery.

AUGMENTING YOUR FORCES

Advanced equipment is obviously important, yet needless upgrading gives up prestige for little concrete benefit. For instance, German tank designs hardly differ until the Pz IIIj, so why waste resources to upgrade to a Pz IIIe? Since prestige carries over in each scenario of the campaign game, don't be afraid to save some for later.

On the other hand, sometimes it pays to augment your auxiliary units. In the Kiev scenario, Kiev itself can fall to auxiliary forces with just a small investment in tank destroyers and infantry. Even disbanding units can sometimes help. For Operation Husky, dump the Italian infantry and replace them with anti-tank guns and artillery; this should keep the allies stuck in Sicily for most of the game.

A word on aircraft: many players be-

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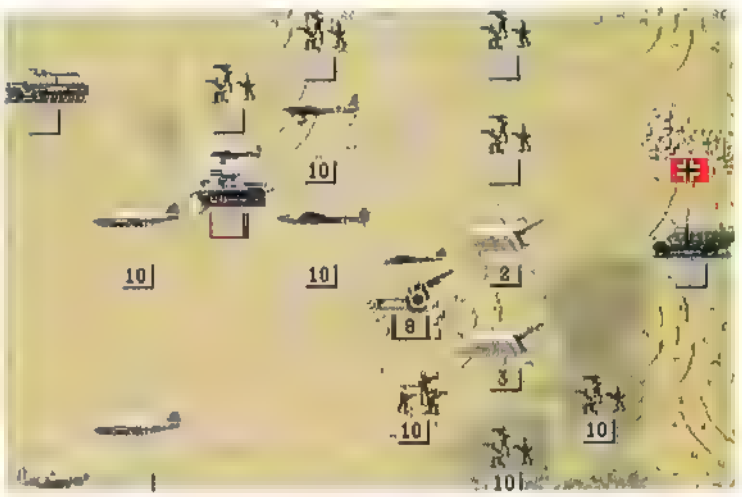
come dependent on air support early in the game, then run into serious difficulties once bad weather scenarios such as Moscow come along. Air power can be deadly, but don't over-invest in aircraft at the expense of artillery.

PACKAGE DELIVERY

PANZER GENERAL is an objective-oriented game, where you win by taking specific objectives within a clearly defined period of time. When planning a scenario, divide your forces into combined arms packages, each of which should include one or two artillery units, one or two infantry units, and one or more tank units, as resources allow. Once a scenario gets going and your forces become spread out, try to keep a few extra tanks with the forward-most group. The objective is to ensure the fastest possible movement with the least possible casualties. Packaging organizes your units to allow for efficient bypassing movements as well as the speedy degradation of strong enemy defenses.



BUSTED BLITZ? This position looks OK, until you notice that the infantry and artillery lag far behind the leading mechanized elements. A little rainfall will reduce all those powerful aircraft into sight-seers.

Let's assume that a strong force of Germans is approaching an Allied objective city. Beyond the first city is a second and then a third, each defended by a combination of enemy units. As the Germans approach, their packages should center around artillery, as these units are the key to taking fortified cities.

POISED TO STRIKE From the setup for *France '40*. Note how the artillery can fire on French units and move down whichever road opens up first.

On the first turn, the attackers should move each package so that they may potentially move past the target city on their next turn. The most important element of operational planning is setting up your units so that they may accomplish both this turn's mission and next turn's as well. In each package identify the most important unit, in this case artillery, and move it first. This ensures that the key units make it to their destinations. Once the artillery is in place, move armor up to screen the artillery from the defenders, then move the infantry into their jumping-off positions for next turn. Always remember to put at least one unit adjacent to the defending city to prevent the enemy from building reinforcements.

For rapid but efficient movement: 1) always scout—recon units are a must; 2) move your most important unit(s); 3) move supporting units into place around them; 4) use your tanks to screen lighter units when on the move. A good tool for organizing movement is to try and visualize where all of your units should be at the end of the turn, how they should relate to each other and to the enemy, and what they will be expected to do the following turn. Keeping all of this straight can be a challenge, but players who can do so will be rewarded. The battlefield is a confusing place, and as things inevitably do not go as planned, moving your most important unit first is helpful, because it tends to ensure that at least that one key move is executed properly. Where reconnaissance is not available, it may be better to move screening forces first simply for safety's sake, but once the screen is in place, immediately go back to the key units.

Returning to our example, at the end of turn one the Germans are well-placed to begin an assault on the city the following turn. If this was the beginning of the game, the Germans might have set up their forces in such a way as to make the assault right away. To this end, always place your artillery at the forefront of your army when setting up. This will ensure that they are able to find targets on turn one.

This setup trick highlights another important principle of mobile combat: always seek to begin your turn in an advantageous position. Anyone can end a turn in good position after a complete movement cycle. But a real tactician attempts to anticipate enemy moves and to position his forces so that when his turn comes, he is ready to attack without having to move. The secret to a rapid-attack strategy in PANZER GENERAL is to attack first, then move into position for the next turn, never letting the enemy rest

At the start of turn two, all the German artillery should shell the defenders. If the city is weakly held, or if the bombardment (combined with any air attack) has seriously reduced the defenders, all of the artillery should move on to positions within range of the next enemy city or defensive position. More strongly defended objectives require that some ar-

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tillery—and therefore their entire package—should stay back to reduce the defenders over a few more turns. Even then, at least one package should fire and move on to the next point of resistance immediately.

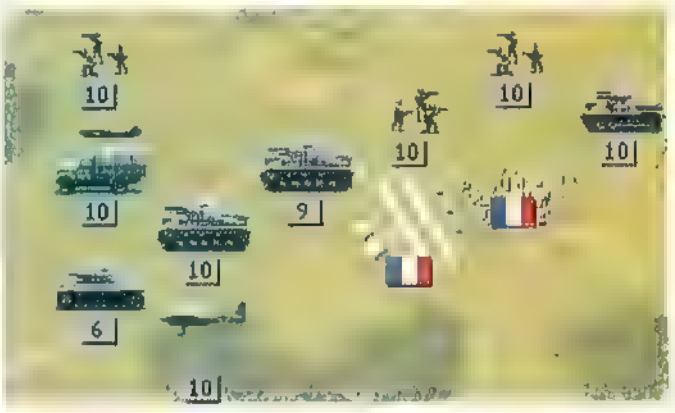
This package should have enough armor in it to effectively screen the artillery and infantry from marauding defenders. In games with auxiliary units, cheap mobile anti-tank units are particularly effective at screening your offensive movements. Screens are constructed by stringing units and their zones of control together to form a line which may not be penetrated or bypassed in a single turn.

On turn three, the artillery which remained should bombard the first city, then move to within range of the next objective. Strongly-held positions will be bombarded repeatedly over a period of several turns, artillery units can still keep up with the vanguard of the advance, and infantry can mop up the weakened defenders left behind.

The goal of this system is to prevent situations in which the armored elements of your army end up far in front of the supporting infantry and artillery. When this happens, the supporting units can be bogged down while the tanks may end up sitting outside a town defended by entrenched infantry, waiting for the appropriate units to catch up.

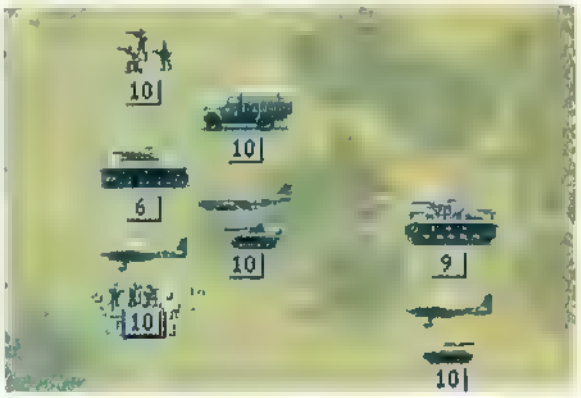
By now a number of successful Panzer Generals will no doubt be wondering "what about the air force?" Well, folks, air power is pretty nifty in Panzer General. Nevertheless, if you depend on it you will eventually end up in serious trouble—either because the weather grounds your planes or because it takes your fighters 3-4 turns to win air superiority—and by then the enemy has an anti-aircraft gun behind every defensive position on the map. If you can attack without depending on aircraft, nothing will be able to withstand your offensive, and when air support is available it will greatly speed an already swift and well-organized advance.

Having said this, a few tips about aircraft are in order. Fighters should be used in the early stages of the game just as tanks are on the ground—as a screen to protect the weaker, less defensible units. Always concentrate on totally eliminating enemy air units, even if this means that others cannot be attacked.



PRIZE PACKAGE Tanks ahead, infantry behind, artillery (truck) at the center, this mobile, hard-hitting formation threatens both Reims and Thierry.

Once you have high-experience, overstrength tactical bombers, don't be afraid to send them against anti-aircraft units if you are in a hurry. A better plan is to have the artillery shell the AA, then take out the rest of the defenders with aircraft, but if this is not possible, a 13-15 strength Stuka can usually render an AA unit ineffective at minimal risk to itself. Level bombers are highly effective against fortifications, since forts must surrender rather than retreat, and the disruption from carpet bombing remains with the target unit until the end of the turn. Simply bomb the fort, then launch even a weak attack; the fort will be forced to surrender even if it takes no losses.



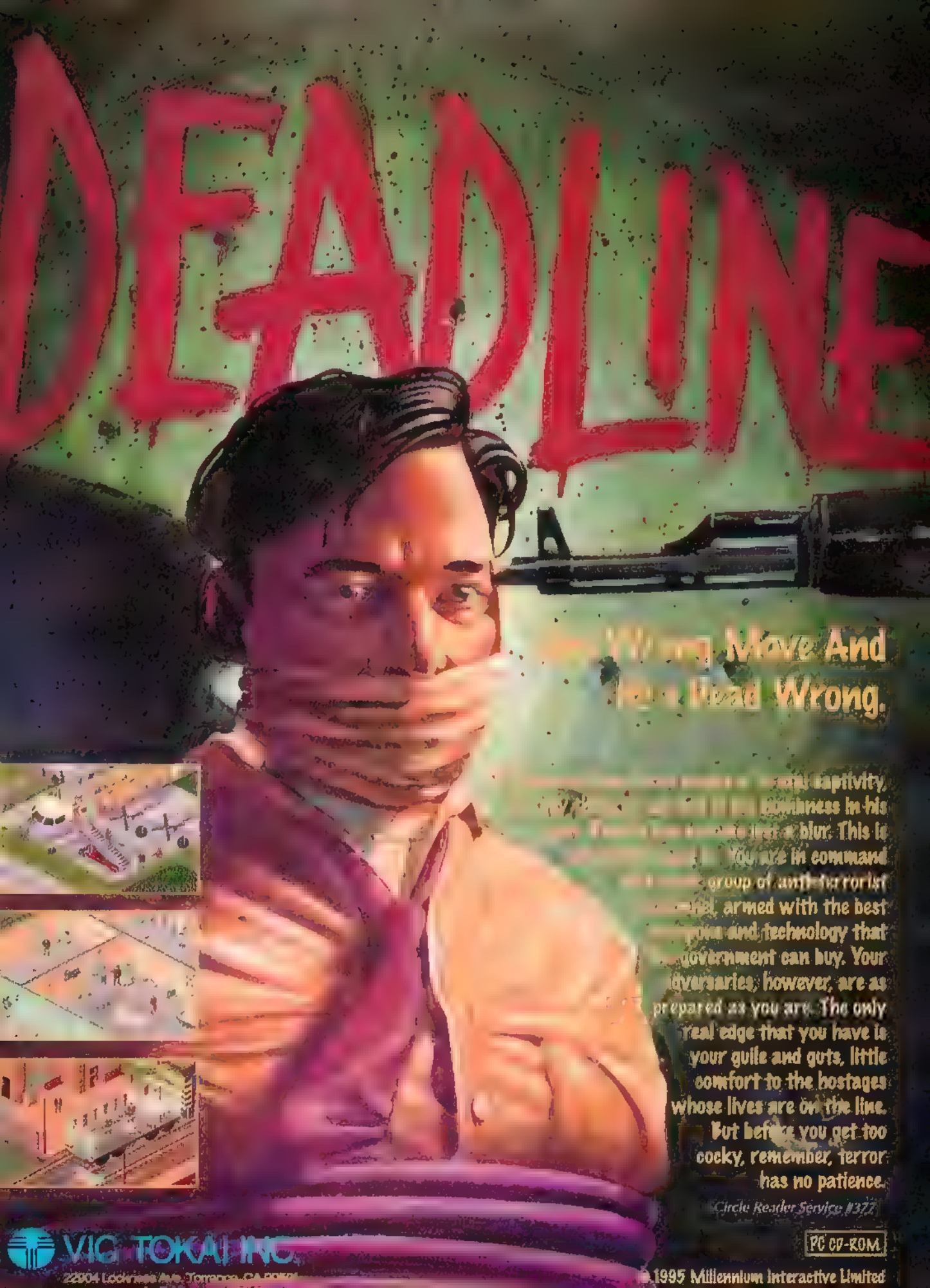
PUMP IT UP After eliminating resistance at Reims, the package moves to Thierry, which it will overrun next turn, bouncing to Paris. The air units are an added boost, rather than a necessity, because of the artillery-armor-infantry combo.

BREAKING THE RULES

Most players quickly determine the match-ups they like to get when attacking in Panzer General. Sometimes, though, it pays to break with tradition when attacking tough positions. For instance, the PzIV is surprisingly effective at attacking entrenched infantry in a city. While the odd rugged defense will blunt the attack, if time is running short this can be an effective city-buster. The taboo many players seem to have against attacking AA guns with aircraft is also largely without substance. Provided your bombers have 300-400 experience, they will usually get to shoot first, allowing them to reduce the AA gun before it has a chance to do real damage. It is generally a much better idea to attack AA directly, rather than other enemy units which are defended by AA fire.

THE WRAP UP

Winning in Panzer General requires finesse, firepower and above all, mobility. Victory will come to those who are able to keep their forces moving, and keep momentum over a long distance. By packaging your forces, your artillery and infantry are able to keep up with your armor and put constant pressure on the enemy. Focusing on artillery rather than air power allows you to cover large spaces safely and still deliver a major blow dependably at the other end of the map—whether rainy, sunny, cloudy, or even in the bleakest depths of the harsh Russian winter. Good hunting!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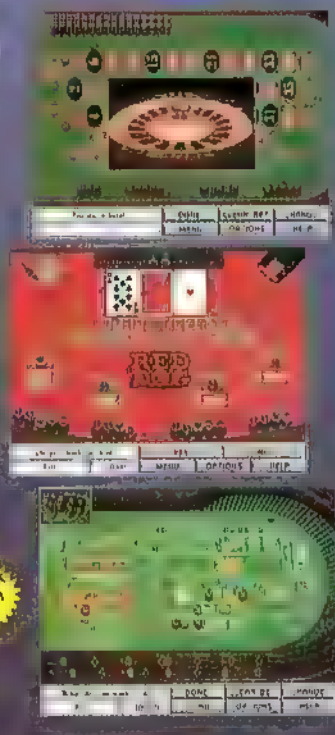

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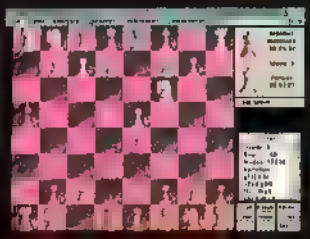

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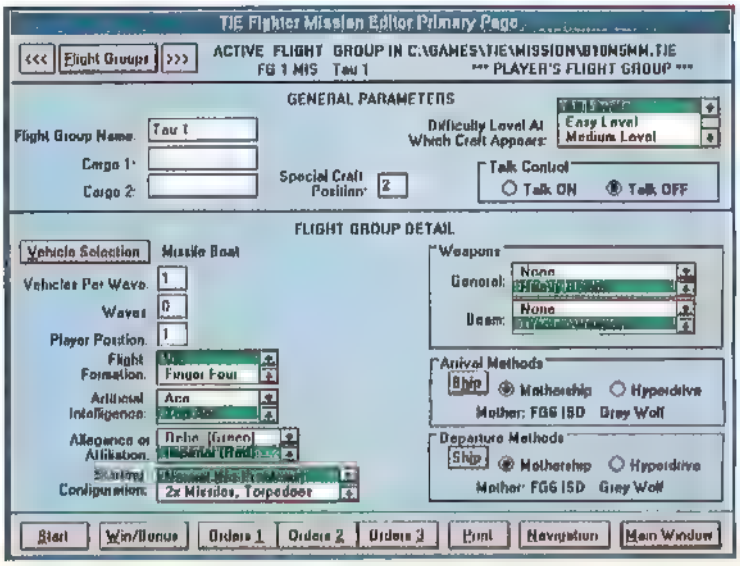
Breaking A TIE

The Rebels Won't Stand A Chance When You're Armed With Cheat Utilities For LucasArts' TIE FIGHTER

by Jeff James

THE SEQUEL TO LUCASART'S POPULAR X-WING, TIE FIGHTER OFFERS GAMERS THE CHANCE TO don an Imperial flight suit and take the fight to those pesky Rebel scum. TIE FIGHTER improves on X-WING in a number of areas, most notably in terms of mission difficulty. Nevertheless, there are times when even the most hardened TIE pilot needs a little assistance—a little push from the "dark side," so to speak. In the past few months, several shareware game utilities have arrived on the scene to let you tinker with TIE FIGHTER to your heart's content. In keeping with the Empire's rich tradition of gaining an unfair advantage at all costs, let's take a look at a few of these cheat and hacking utilities.



TOOL OF THE DARK SIDE Wayne Sikes' TIE Fighter Editor is the mother of all Imperial hacking utilities. With it, you can change just about any TIE FIGHTER mission parameter.

TIE Fighter Mission Goals Viewer v2.0

Archive title: PRIMARY.ZIP

by Sterling Moses

This is the most simple and straightforward of all the utilities I've found. Unlike more ambitious editors and hacks, this program focuses specifically on printing the mission goals of each TIE FIGHTER mission. If you've ever wandered through space trying to remember which flight groups you need to protect or destroy to complete a mission, this program will provide you with the information you need. Using the utility with the "-B" option will force it to list all the bonus goals of the mission in question.

TIE Fighter Ship Change and Randomizer v1.0

Archive title: TIESCR.ZIP

by Eric Wilkinson

A bit more ambitious than the aforementioned utility, this program can extend the playability of the game once you've completed all the missions. Its most useful feature is a ship randomizer that scrambles some variables in the TIE FIGHTER missions you select. Easy missions that involved blasting outdated rebel fighters can suddenly become challenging with the addition of a few TIE Defenders to the mix. In addition, TIESCR also allows you to add a tractor beam to every vessel in the game, except for the original TIE Fighter. To use this utility, simply copy it to your TIE\MISSION directory and type the program name.

TIE Mission Editor v1.2

Archive title: TME.ZIP

by Sean Baker

If your conscience nagged you constantly while you were blowing away Rebel pilots in your TIE Defender, Sean Baker's TIE Mission Editor may be just what your Super Ego is looking for. Using TME, you can change a wide variety of mission variables. If you'd rather fight against the Empire, you can insert yourself in an "enemy" flight group and fight against your former wingmen. You can also change the types and weapons available on each craft, allowing you to load up a favorite ship with enough weapons to make a Star Destroyer look twice before attacking you. The interface is entirely menu driven, but a bit on the clunky side. You may want to spend a while tinkering with smaller missions before moving on to larger engagements; I found that making many edits on a big mission can yield unexpected results.

TIE Fighter Editor v1.1

Archive title: TIEDIT.ZIP

by Wayne Sikes and K&W Computer Works

Wayne Sikes' TIE Fighter Editor (TIEDIT) is undoubtedly the king of the hacking hill. Unlike most game utilities, TIEDIT is entirely windows-based, featuring extensive on-line help. This super-editor allows you to tinker with just about everything in a mission, including

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CHEAT OF THE MONTH CLUB

RISE OF THE TRIAD

Here's a thick wad of codes that will keep the triad terrorists on their toes. To turn on the cheat mode type "DIPSTICK" and then any of the following codes:

General Codes	
CHOJIN	Invincible + unlimited [illegible]
COFO	Warp menu
REEN	Re-color current [illegible]
GOOBERS	Re-start game
GOARCH	Skips to next level
GOGATES	Quite program
Safety Codes	
SIXTOYS	All keys and bulletproof [illegible]
PANIC	Resets you to full health
HUNTPACK	All keys + [illegible]
LUNGDUNG	Gas mask
BURNME	Asbestos suit
SHOOTME	Bulletproof [illegible]
Powerup Codes	
TOOSAD	Hand of God
FLYBOY	Mercury Wing Mode
BADTRIP	Mushrooms Mode
BOING	Elastic Mode (Bounce [illegible])
Environment Codes	
DIMON	Light diminishing on
DIMOFF	Light diminishing off
GOTA486	Turns on ceiling and floor textures
GOTA386	Turns off ceiling and floor textures
LONDON	Turns on fog
NODNOL	Turns off fog
SHINEON	Turns on lights
SHINEOFF	Turns off lights
Weapon Codes	
JOHNNOO	Dual pistols
PLUGEM	MP40 machine gun
VANILLA	Bazooka
HOTTIME	Heat-Seeking Missile
BOOZE	Drunk Missile
FIREBOMB	FireBomb
BONES	Flamewall
SEEYA	Hand of God
RIDE	MissileCam view
Miscellaneous Codes	
HERE	Brings up a HUD of your position
RECORD	Records a demo of a level
STOP	Stops recording
PLAY	Plays a demo
WHACK	Hurt yourself
SPEED	Hurt the name says
SEMI	Kill yourself

(but not limited to) increasing the number of ships in a flight group, changing pilot skill levels, adding new weapons to your ships, and altering ship flight paths and locations. You can even add a "decoy beam," a mission-oriented weapon that only Darth Vader was allowed to use, to your vessels. Once you've altered flight groups and their destinations, you can view them via TIEDIT's graphical, overhead map of the mission area. Using the included print utility, you can make hardcopy output of all the relevant data in any mission you edit. On the downside, the non-registered shareware version locks out most of the features, allowing you to perform only a few minor changes. The $15 registration fee for the full version is a mere pittance when you consider what this program can do.

COLONIZATION TIP

Having trouble making headway in the New World? Here's a powerful cheat for the colonial governor in need. Hold down the <ALT> key while typing "WIN" and a cheat menu will appear with options allowing you to add new units, eliminate Indians, and build all sorts of useful devices.

This cheat comes courtesy of Mike S. McCurdy, sent to *CGW* at our World Wide Web site. If you've discovered an interesting cheat, hack, easter egg or sure-fire tactic, let us know!

Jeff James, CGW columnist and associate editor of InterActive Gaming, can be reached through the Internet at 74774.1635@compuserve.com.

To locate these utilities on-line, tune in to the *CGW* headquarters on ZiffNet. Games featured here can be downloaded from ZiffNet both on CompuServe and on Prodigy. On CompuServe, go to *Computer Gaming World*'s own forum (GO GAMEWORLD), Library 7, Shareware Sizzle. On Prodigy, jump ZiffNet and Search by Title for the games listed here. Or, Search by Category to browse the entire Games Library.

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Where's My Bikini Wax?

By Chuck Miller

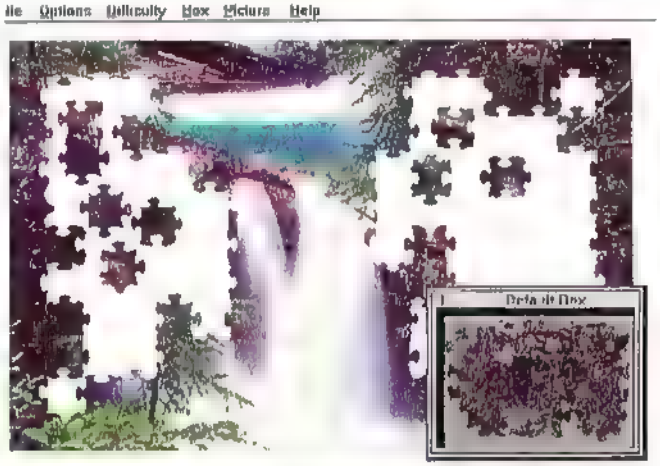
Since the inception of this column, it's been my goal to give exposure to enjoyable shareware games, especially homegrown titles unlikely to see the light of day in other publications. This not only encourages today's game design initiates (who may later go on to become the Spielbergs of computer gaming), but also provides a source of very affordable entertainment. Accordingly, this time around we focus on two charming games that are a good ways off the beaten path: a jigsaw puzzle game and a role-playing game that puts you in the boots of a female superhero.

THE JIG'S UP!

With the exception of a single puzzle in each of **Sierra**'s Dr. Brain edutainment titles, interlocking jigsaw puzzles have never really spilled over onto the computer screen. There have been a few programs that break graphic images into puzzle pieces, but none have gone as far as JIXXA for Windows in faithfully recreating a true jigsaw puzzle on screen.

In JIXXA, puzzles begin with a random scattering of pieces, each a real jigsaw-shaped cutout that can be moved freely about the screen and joined with other pieces. If a puzzle piece is placed alongside a matching cutout, the two lock into place with a satisfying little click. Otherwise, it remains detached. Locked pieces may then be moved as a single unit and placed anywhere on the screen.

As with cardboard jigsaw puzzles, management of loose pieces can be a problem, one JIXXA solves by employing "virtual boxes." These boxes are used to organize puzzle pieces and can be named (Edges, Greens, Water, etc.), resized, moved about the screen, and hidden until needed. In addition, if you are having trouble placing puzzle pieces, selecting "Auto Solve" from the menu will cause JIXXA to complete the puzzle for you one piece at a time. Of course, you can stop it at any time and resume on your own. You can also save a puzzle in progress so that you can pick up later right where you left off. And if you're stumped, you can always view the completed picture (like looking at the box cover) for help in determining your next move.



EASY PIECES With its barrage of features, it's not the least bit puzzling that JIXXA is a great jigsaw puzzler.

Because it is so attractive and well thought out, JIXXA is an excellent piece of entertainment software. You simply won't find a better rendition of jigsaw puzzles on the computer anywhere. Still, on the downside, there could have been a bit more functionality in the shareware version. Being able to show the timer during play or to access the "hint" feature (which allows you to place an individual puzzle piece) would have been nice. More importantly, there could have been at least one more puzzle included. The two provided are okay, but offer a rather limited play experience as shareware products go.

If you would like to give JIXXA a try, it's available (JIXXA.ZIP) on most major online services and on Rhode Island Soft System's own BBS, Connections, at (401) 767-3931. All you need is Windows 3.1 or higher, 4MB RAM and a 256-color SVGA graphics card. For those who want the full registered version including four new puzzles, just send $24.95 in U.S. funds to: Rhode Island Soft Systems Inc., P.O. Box 748, Woonsocket, RI 02895 or call (800) 959-7477. There is also a Premier Edition of JIXXA on CD-ROM ($39.95) with 12 new puzzles that lets you choose between three sizes of puzzle pieces.

DONNING MY KEVLAR BIKINI

One of the most neglected areas in shareware gaming has been that of the role-playing genre. There has been a real dearth of games in this popular category, probably due in large part to the increased complexity in developing a solid RPG title. There has also been a lack of sufficient games that deal with the superhero theme (yes, I still watch *Batman* and *The Green Hornet* from time to time on FX). Well, even though it won't steal any thunder from the few commercial offerings out there, I nonetheless found **HomeBrew Software**'s SUPERHER for Windows (okay, they could have come up with a much better title than this) an interesting and enjoyable change of pace, allowing me to assume the role of a female superhero.

In SUPERHER, the player dons a see-through kevlar bikini (though you'd never know it from the on-screen representation)

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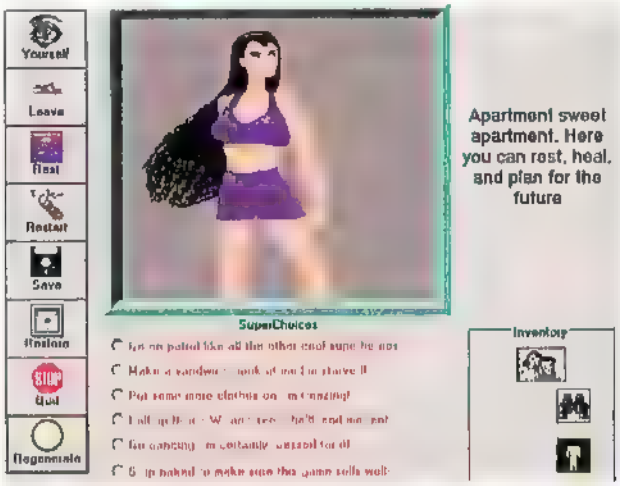
and sets out to battle the forces of evil. As established in the storyline, we find that SUPERHER (her real name is not disclosed) must head from Cornwall, Vermont, to the big city where she, as a superhero, must combat crime. Her motive? To raise the funds necessary to provide a wonder drug for her ill father (Pa Guptill), locate her missing sister (Angela) and save their homestead in the process.

From the standpoint of game mechanics, superpowers are randomly assigned at the beginning of play and modified after each successful encounter, allowing the player to assign points to the areas needing the most attention. Movement in the gameworld is accomplished via an overhead map similar in appearance to the old boardgame, Life. Upon arrival at each location, the overhead view is replaced with a conversation window offering several action options. From here, you can access the system controls, talk with characters, ask about objects in inventory or enter combat. Combat, of the turn-based variety, is presented in side-view perspective.



BODACIOUS BABES, BATMAN! In SUPERHER, players don a kevlar bikini to play crime buster in efforts to save Pa, Sis and the ranch.

From a technological standpoint, don't expect SUPERHER to fully recharge your superpowers. Though it's competent, portrays its superhero theme well, and offers musical accompaniment that contributes positively to the game's atmosphere, graphics are a mixed lot that could stand significant improvement. There are also bugs in the game, which is an early version (1.0). On several occasions, my system locked entirely, some of the text was cut off or missing in a couple of encounters, and one scene repeatedly locked itself in a continual loop (though it could be avoided, as the scene was not necessary for successful completion of the game). In other words, it doesn't take x-ray vision to discover that SUPERHER needs some additional work. Still, none of the problems were severe enough to cause me to quit playing, and they only reduced my enjoyment slightly.

Some additional bug stomping and some professional graphics could really make this game...well, super good. If you'd like a unique change of pace in your gaming and don't mind a long download (just over 2MB of data), SUPERHER will certainly deliver. Though not of the same caliber as games like SUPERHERO LEAGUE OF HOBOKEN, it's still worth the investment. Who knows, you may like the feel of kevlar next to your skin. If so, the registered version can be acquired for $25 plus $2 shipping and handling from HomeBrew Software, 807 Davis Street, Suite E, Vacaville, CA 95687. Credit card orders can be placed through Public (software) Library at (800) 2424-PsL.

Chuck Miller is the editor of InterActive Gaming and CGW's Shaman of Shareware. He can be reached on CompuServe at 74774,1476, America Online at IGAMING, and through the Internet at interactive.gaming@swcbbs.com.

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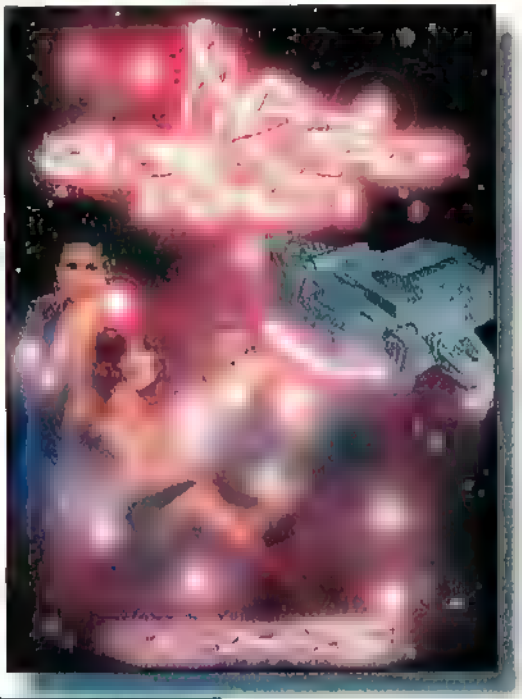

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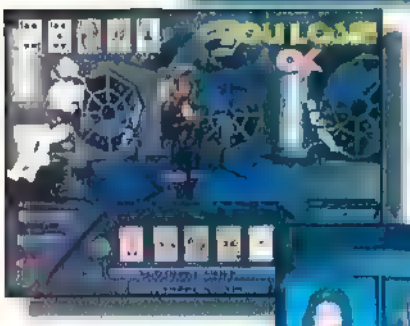

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Circle Reader Service #213

Fight Like A Man

The Technology That Gave Human Movement To The Synthetic Actors of BIOFORGE

by Paul C. Schuytema

IN THE DARK, ARCANE TOMES OF COMPUTER GAME VOODOO, A NEW ENTRY HAS BEEN RECENTLY ADDED. IN THE chapter entitled "Animation: Bringing Pixels To Life," you'll find an entry for BIOFORGE, **Origin Systems**' new "interactive movie." The cryptic magic recipe reads:

"First, add equal parts of SALSA and 'heinous math.' Next, toss in a flock of birds and a severed arm. Mix well, stirring continuously for nearly 30 months, and presto, you'll have the most lifelike computer puppet the gaming world has yet to see."

BIOFORGE is unique in that it is a game which not only offers stunning graphics and good gameplay, but it affords us a chance to sample the future of technology. Lex, the player's super-fluid alter-ego in the game, is a "synthetic actor," crafted by an artful blending of high-quality graphics and "real world" digital position data. This data was captured using the tandem of magnetic resonance receivers strapped to a human's body and Origin's own PC software, SALSA (System for Animating Lifelike Synthetic Actors).

THE DIRECTOR'S CUT

Ken Demerest, BIOFORGE's director and technological father, began with a vision, or rather, more of a visionary obsession. He was convinced that an interactive movie with synthetic actors was the wave of the future.

Demerest's first job at Origin was as a programmer on the ULTIMA 7 project, and it was during that project that the core idea for BIOFORGE began to take form. When he played in ULTIMA 7's world, he couldn't escape the feeling that there was something more—some way to bring the player into the game in a fresh way. For him, the combination of synthetic actors with a cinematic game environment seemed to hold the most promise.

"Synthetic actors are tricky things," said Demerest. "Real actors have the control necessary to really get into a role and deal with all the subtleties that bring a character to life. That's a far more difficult task with synthetic actors, who must rely solely on large-scale body movement and dialogue."

Demerest tackled this difficulty by blending "classical gameplay" (letting the player control the character absolutely) with a director's ability to craft a plot that flows from one scene to the next. Demerest saw too much freedom as a flaw in the Ultima games; giving the player a sense of direction and pressure actually increased the player's immersion in the game. "And with immersion," says Demerest, "you can come pretty close to presenting the emotional subtext of your story."

IN THE BEGINNING...

In the early months of BIOFORGE, Demerest and his team experimented with many different approaches to creating synthetic actors. They tried filming live action from two perpendicular cameras, and then going back, frame by frame, and digitizing the data to control the computer characters. This turned out to be a "very painful process."

Then Demerest toyed with the idea of filming an actor with bright white spots painted on his joints. Again, this proved to be far too labor intensive.

It was then that Demerest turned his attention to a computerized motion capture system called FLOCK OF BIRDS from the **Ascension Technology Corporation**. When he saw what the system could do, he was sold. "If I was going to get the 3D figures looking and moving organically and beautifully," he said, "then this was the kind of thing that I really needed." The only difficulty was convincing Origin to shell out a hefty $30,000 for the hardware. Swift talking and an enthusiasm born of obsession eventually got Demerest the tools for the job.

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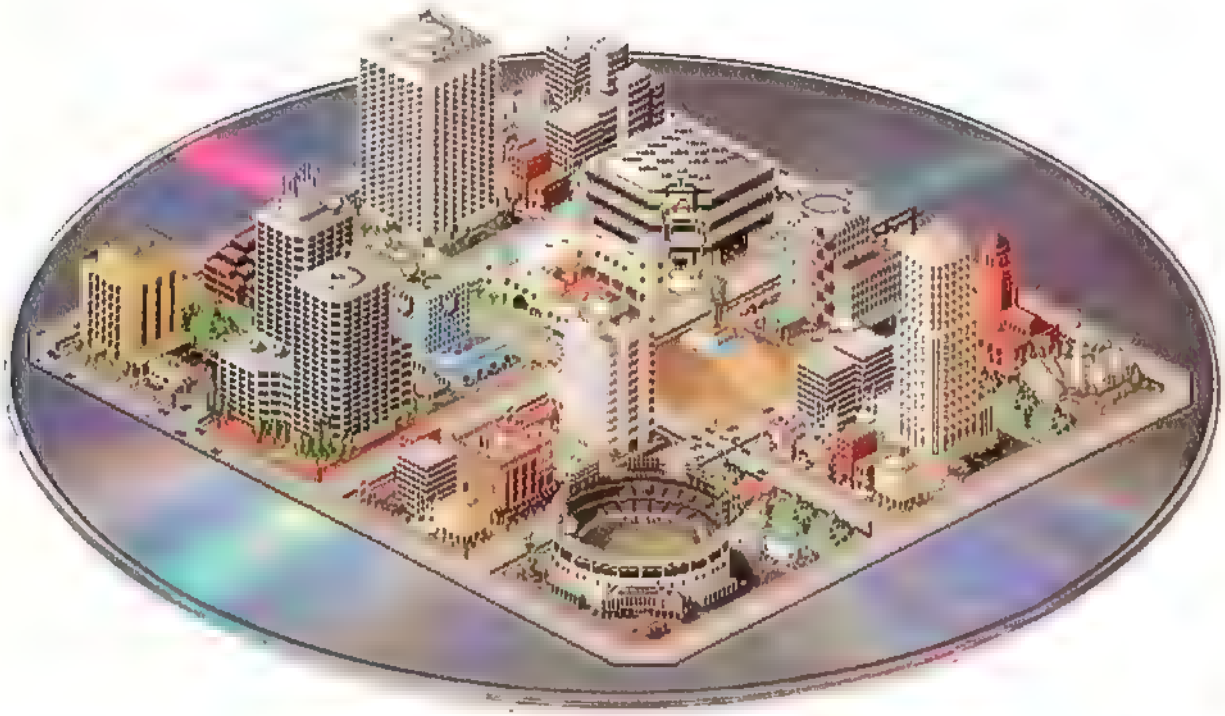

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A FLOCK OF RECEIVERS

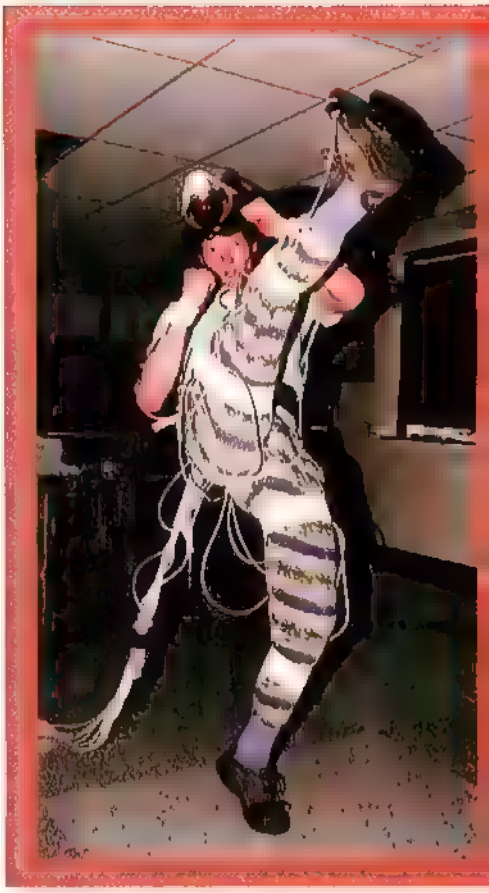
There are a host of ways to get a human's "real-world" motion into the computer. Rotoscoping, the old Max Fleischer animation technique, has been used extensively by companies such as **Dynamix** in their FRONT PAGE SPORTS titles. Rotoscoping involves capturing movement to film (or video), and then creating computer art, frame by frame, to match the live footage. While this can yield wonderfully fluid results, it is, by its nature, a two-dimensional process. If you want to use a particular motion from a different angle, you need to physically film an actor from a different angle and then create another animation sequence.

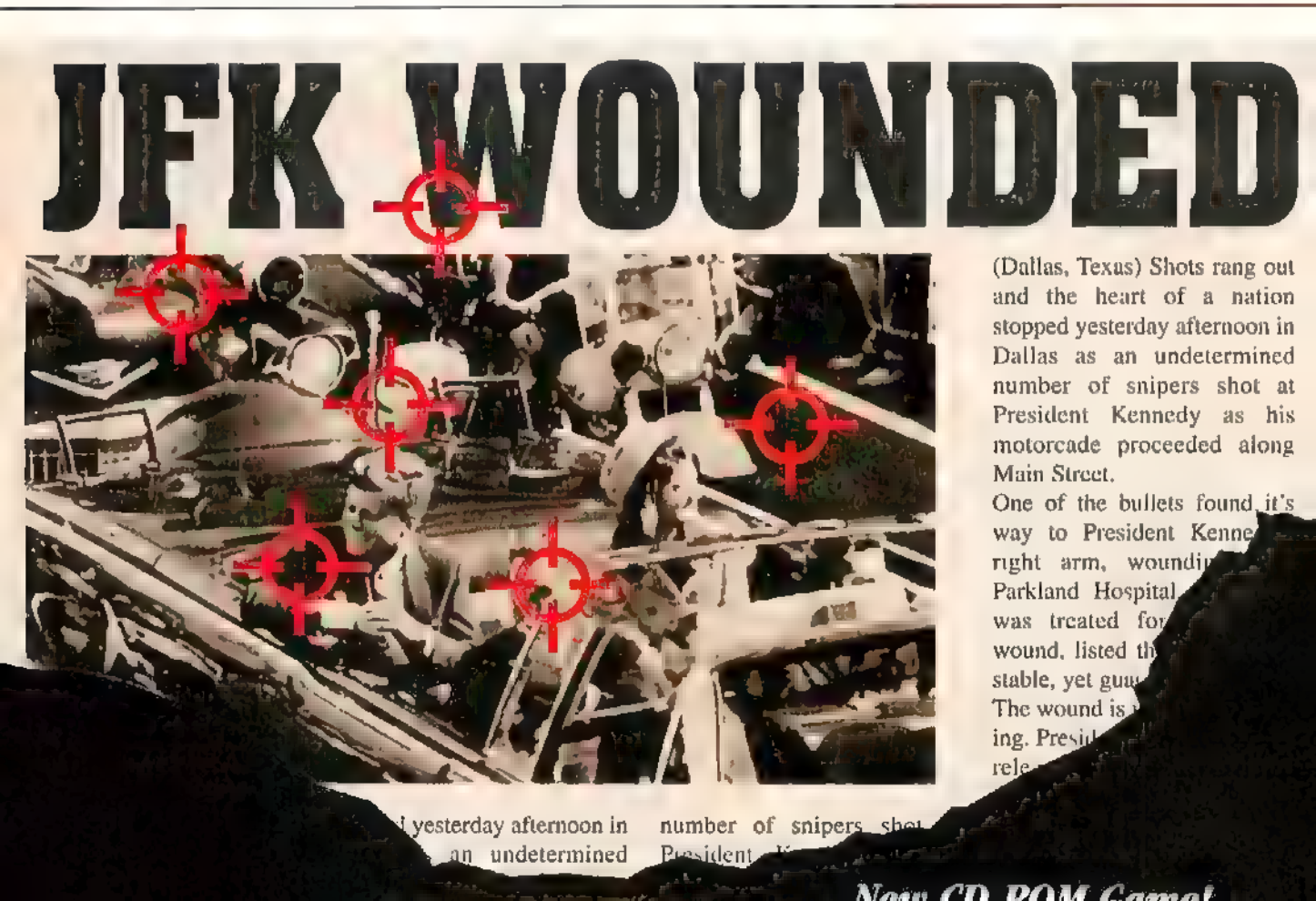
In just the last few years, high-end 3D modeling and animation programs have begun to utilize a technique called "inverse kinemation" to simulate human movement. This essentially means animating a skeleton whose bones are linked together in a meaningful hierarchy (as in the old "thigh bone connected to the knee bone..." ditty). With this approach, if you specify a movement path for a hand, then the forearm, upper arm and shoulders will all move accordingly.

The problem with this type of animation is that it is very labor intensive; an animation artist must control and program all of the movements. And while the results can be excellent, there is a decidedly "computery" feel to the animation. The subtlety of human movement is extremely difficult to recreate by "brute force" animation. That task is best suited for a system which can actually record the movements of a real live person

Enter FLOCK OF BIRDS, a magnetic motion tracking system specifically designed to capture the unique three-dimensional motions of an active human body. These motions are transformed into digital data which computers can then use to breathe life into a synthetic actor.

The FLOCK OF BIRDS system has three essential components (and miles of white wire to connect them all together): a base unit, a transmitter and a bunch of receivers. A live actor is fitted with an ar-





KICK ONE, TWO, THREE Starr Long, Origin's Quality Assurance Leader, suits up in FLOCK OF BIRDS and lets loose a kick (*left*). His motions are captured by the SALSA software (*top*), and the captures are used to animate the final, high-quality version of Lex (*above*).

ray of tiny, one-inch cubic receivers, fastened by Velcro straps. These receivers go in obvious places: the hand, the elbow, the shoulder, etc. Placement of these is critical, since they measure all six axes of motion; poor placement and the data won't be any good.

A transmitter then sits in front of the actor. When the system is engaged, the transmitter emits pulsed DC magnetic waves. The tiny receivers pick up these waves and send signals back to the controller, which can then determine the receivers' exact position in space in relation to the transmitter.

THE WORLD OF SALSA

At this point, the positional data from the FLOCK OF BIRDS system isn't very useful: it's just a stream of raw data from a couple of receivers floating in space. What is needed is a software system to interpret the data in a meaningful way, and, at the beginning of the BIOFORGE project, Demerest had nothing of the kind. At that time, Silicon Graphics workstations were the only platform to support motion capture, and Origin just didn't have the resources to invest in that pricey of a system.

That left Demerest with no other option but to crunch code and create his own motion capture and editing system, SALSA. Working on a 486-66, Demerest crafted a highly useful recording program which let the BIOFORGE team gather up their motion captures in real time, all the while viewing the fully texture-mapped synthetic actors on the screen. This involved some "absolutely heinous, heinous math," says Demerest.

A LONG, STRANGE TRIP

Creating the 250 movements for Lex in BIOFORGE was a far more involved process than simply strapping on the receivers. A long process of development preceded the motion capture. Initially, the characters such as Lex and the cyberraptor began as artist sketches. From the sketches, artists worked in **Autodesk**'s 3D STUDIO to create a 3-D image for the creature.

Once the 3-D image was nailed down with enough detail, the artists turned to

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SALSA to craft a skeleton. Then, it was back to 3D STUDIO to create final renders of the front, back and sides of the creature. These graphics files were imported into **Electronic Arts'** proprietary texture mapping tool called EOR. Within EOR, the artist would then create a simple polygon mesh for the creature upon which the 3D STUDIO images were pasted.

Back in SALSA, the artists combined the simple mesh skin and the SALSA skeleton. The skeleton and the mesh were linked together, so when Lex's arm would move, so would the texture-mapped skin. Finally, the individual components of the virtual skeleton were linked to a FLOCK OF BIRDS receiver, so that when a human wearing the FLOCK OF BIRDS equipment moved, the SALSA image of Lex would mimic the movement.

"Then, the work actually began," said Demerest. The actor donned the FLOCK OF BIRDS and it was time to begin capturing the moves to disk. Most of Lex's combat maneuvers are Ken Demerest's, while nearly all of the other motion captures were done by the project's quality assurance leader, Starr Long.

STARR FOR A DAY

"Starr had absolutely no extra fat on him at all," remarked Demerest, "and he wasn't overly muscular. That's not a slam on Starr; it turns out that he was just perfect for FLOCK OF BIRDS." Since Long was so lean, when he moved, his muscle-flexes weren't large enough to move the receivers out of the way, so his motion captures were very clean and fluid.

For many of the motion captures, the BIOFORGE team had to be creative in implementing maneuvers within the limited area of movement allowed by the mass of wires. The most difficult maneuver was Lex's back flip. For that one, Demerest suited up and positioned two hefty Origin staffers on each side of him, with another to keep a grip on the bundle of wires. Demerest crouched down in the combat position and gave the signal. He was hoisted up into the air, and his legs where thrown back over his head. "I did the best I could to land back in the combat crouch," Demerest recalls.

For the cyberraptor, Starr suited up. The sensors on his legs performed the expected walking movements, but the sensors on his right arm were mapped to the raptor's neck and head. His left arm was the tail. After practicing what looked like some sort of drug-aided kabuki theater, Long was able to create the motions of a cybernetic dinosaur with incredible realism.

FORGED IN DOUBT

After 30 months of intense research and development, Origin still wasn't sure if they had a winner in BIOFORGE. "When we were finally done with this project, there was a lot of doubt," reflected Demerest. "Dare I say it, even from our sales folks. The question was, after two and a half years, could it be new? I certainly think it is."

Yet, new or not, Demerest feels his work is only a first small step toward much bigger things. "I don't think we're in, or even near, the final incarnation of what an interactive movie can be," he said. "But it's a damn good start."

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Modem Operandi

Tips For Buying A Modem And Getting The Blinking Thing To Work

by Mike Weksler

ONE THING EVERYONE SEEMS TO FORGET WITH ALL THE "INFO-HIGHWAY" HYPE IN THE GENERAL media is our relatively archaic means of accessing this universe of data and coolness—the modem. When the "Father of Cyberpunk" William Gibson wrote *Neuromancer*, he imagined "jacking in" to "cyberspace" would be something like this:

He closed his eyes.

Found the ridged face of the power stud.

And in the bloodlit dark behind his eyes, silver phosphenes boiling in from the edge of space, hypnagogic images jerking past him like film compiled from random frames. Symbols, figures, faces, a blurred, fragmented mandala of visual information.

Please, he prayed, now—

A gray disk, the color of Chiba sky.

Now

Disk beginning to rotate, faster, becoming a sphere of paler gray. Expanding—

And flowed, flowered for him, fluid neon origami trick, the unfolding of his distanceless home, his country, transparent 3D chessboard extending to infinity... And somewhere he was laughing, in a white-painted loft, distant fingers caressing the deck, tears of release streaking his face.

In contrast to Gibson's kaleidoscopic vision, unseasoned cybersufers often find themselves in something like the following scenario (with apologies to William Gibson):

In the darkened room, he booted the machine and switched on the small black box; the new V.34 modem's shrink-wrap on the floor ablaze in blue light reflected from the monitor.

He invoked the navigation program to open the net's floodgates, selected the number for one of his on-line services and clicked; the modem's display sprang to life in flashing green diodes like tollbooths on the infobahn. "Soon," he thought, "soon the PANZER GENERAL save game will be downloaded from my e-mail and I shall unleash with a vengeance upon my foe!"

Modemsong emitted from the speaker; the familiar squooching tone—the indicator that he and his computer will become one with the other machine.

"Soon—"

Cursors blinking forever, time standing still, diode lights ceasing, error messages appearing: "Carrier not detected," "IRQ in use," "wincim.exe has caused a General Protection Fault in module..."

And somewhere he was cursing, angry fists hammering down upon the small black box, tears of anguish streaking down his face and falling on the modem documentation below...

Whether you want to cruise the net or go head-to-head in a modem-capable, multiplayer game, you won't get anywhere if you can't saddle up a modem—a peripheral which allows your computer to talk to other computers. While appearing simple, the modem doesn't exactly work like an FM radio—it requires a certain level of expertise in both setting up the hardware and in running the communications software.

STALKING THE PERFECT SQUAWK BOX

Here's a few basic tips on what to look for when purchasing a modem. First, there are two basic types—external and internal. External modems are very easy to install. All you need is an available COM (serial) port and the right cable to go from the COM port to the modem. The best part about an external is that you get blinking lights telling you about the status of your connection. Additionally, you have a separate on-off switch to terminate a "hung" connection without rebooting the machine. However, the external modem does take up a small amount of space and requires an AC adapter.

Installing an internal modem, by contrast, is a little more difficult. Obviously, you have to open up your computer and install the modem card. You also have to configure an internal modem as one of your COM (serial) ports, which can make a sound card installation look easy by comparison. Look for an internal modem that's entirely software configurable and your life will be much easier.

Once you determine the type of modem, the next significant feature to look for is speed—more specifically, the transfer rate of the modem in bits per second (bps). Currently, most on-line services are gearing up for 28,800 (or 28.8) bps transfer rate. Only a few years ago, slower modems like 2400bps were acceptable because we primarily dealt with smaller file transfers and text-only interfaces. With today's larger files and graphic

SHORT CIRCUITS

For those of you who are maxed out on your full-dress Pentium 100 MHz machines, Intel is now shipping a 120MHz Pentium processor. This new chip is manufactured using a .35 micron process, which means that the chip is smaller—half the size of the current .6 micron Pentiums and about one-quarter the size of the early .8 micron Pentium processors. So if you need that extra horsepower, it's definitely worth a look. However, at a distributor cost of $935 in large quantities, most people upgrading may opt for a Pentium 90MHz or 100MHz-based machine until the price falls. Additionally, sources at Intel say that the 150MHz Pentium processor and the P6 are due later this year. For more information, call (800) 628-8686.

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front ends, consider a 14.4bps modem to be the slowest speed to purchase. At this speed, one megabyte of data should transfer in approximately ten minutes.

Next, there are a few standards which you should be aware of. First, think of Hayes as the Sound Blaster standard for modems—most of the modem-capable games out there require a Hayes-compatible modem. Additionally, V.34 is the latest standard when looking for a modem. Finally, the latest standard for compression is V.42 bis, and the latest standard for error correction is V.42. Several models of modems also come with built in fax compatibility. A good V.34 28.8bps modem can be found for around $180-$250, and the same modem with fax capability upwards of $350 plus. Some of the common brands of modems are US Robotics, Hayes, Motorola, Practical Peripherals, Supra, and Intel.

Another thing to consider when purchasing a modem is getting the same one your game buddies have. It makes it much easier to troubleshoot a head-to-head connection in a game if you both have the same modems. Troubleshooting is no simple matter, because modems are the only peripherals that require you to type obscure, assembly language-like values into a setup screen.

HOT CHAT

Once you've found the right modem and set it up properly, you'll need to master two essential skills: sending e-mail messages and transferring files. E-mail will open up a world of possibilities for gamers. You'll be able to get technical support from game companies, chat with fellow gamers about strategies, and, who knows, maybe even find a spouse! File transferring skills will allow you to download patches, saved games, demo games, and even playable games.

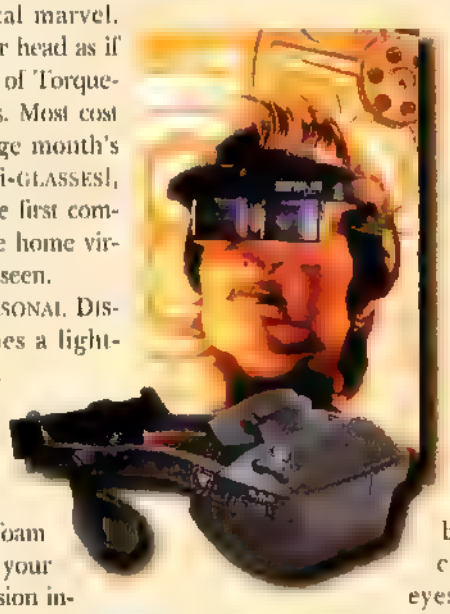
But perhaps the most compelling reason for jumping in and getting acquainted with modems and the on-line world is the new breed of on-line games coming out. **Domark**'s CONFIRMED KILL will allow you to access their system over the Internet, and **Papyrus** has announced plans for a multi-player, on-line NASCAR RACING on their own network. Can you imagine dogfighting in WWII aircraft with pilots from all over the world or blasting down the Info Highway in a 700 hp stock car with the real Robbie Gordon inches from your virtual exhaust pipe? Perhaps I'm not stretching it too much when I say that the meek shall inherit the earth—the rest of us will be on-line! ☯

THE PARTS REPT.

Futuristic i-glasses Bring VR Closer Than Ever

by Mike Weksler

SOME VIRTUAL REALITY HEAD-MOUNTED DISPLAYS ARE MORE REMINISCENT OF SOMETHING FROM A Flash Gordon movie than a 21st Century technological marvel. Other units fit on your head as if they if they were one of Torquemada's torture devices. Most cost more than the average month's rent. **Virtual i-O's** i-GLASSES!, however, represent the first compelling and affordable home virtual reality system I've seen.



The i-GLASSES! PERSONAL DISPLAY SYSTEM combines a lightweight display unit with an elastic head strap and stereo earphones. The device is easily adjusted to fit your skull and has a foam pad to support it on your forehead. The PC version includes a small head-tracking device which replaces the elastic strap on the back of the headset. The whole thing weighs about 14 ounces, and without the head-tracking device is just eight ounces.

Unlike other VR helmets which require some adjustment for your eyes, the i-GLASSES! are ready for anyone to use right out of the box. You can even wear them over your prescription eyeglasses.

They're also easy to use, with just two controls for power and volume. The display consists of two 0.7-inch color LCD panels, but because the image is magnified by optics and is so close to the user's eyes, the image appears to be larger than it is. Virtual i-O claims the display is comparable to an 80-inch screen, but not all users will perceive display size the same.

i-GLASSES! is served in two basic flavors: video and PC. The video version accepts input directly from an NTSC source like your VCR, while the PC version ships with a VGA-NTSC scan converter from which the i-GLASSES! receives its signal. Audio is routed from your sound card into the i-GLASSES! scan converter as well. The i-GLASSES! even support visual stereo 3D. The installation is a breeze—you don't have to open your computer or go through an elaborate setup.

The PC version ships with a CD packed with an assortment of games and demos, and includes drivers for **LucasArts**' DARK FORCES and **Bullfrog**'s MAGIC CARPET. There are custom versions of **Raven's** HERETIC and **Interplay's** DESCENT that have impressive enhancements over their stock versions. The Virtual i-O version of HERETIC and DESCENT support head tracking, which allows you to look up, down, and left to right within the game universe. This means you can move or fly in a different direction by moving your head, or shoot baddies just by looking at them and firing.

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The enhanced version of DESCENT is presented in full stereo 3D, and with head tracking it is amazingly immersive. The only caveat with these games is that using your head to control your direction of movement can be mildly disorienting. The head tracking has a slight lag time, and it is not as natural as turning your head to look at objects in the real world. In discussing the disorientation, game producer Seamus Blackley of **Looking Glass Technologies** (SYSTEM SHOCK, FLIGHT UNLIMITED) said that, "Normally, you move your head, then you look with your eyes. With the consumer headsets, you are forced to keep your eyes fixed and move your head around."

The most impressive implementation of the i-GLASSES! I've seen is with the **LucasArts'** DARK FORCES driver provided with the unit. This driver allows you to move your head independently of your virtual body in the game. The result is amazing and totally immersive—I could run forward and look back over my shoulder to see if I was being chased! The feeling of looking down over a drop-off was incredibly realistic.

All of this is very cool, but the resolution is not the same as most gamers are used to. Though the i-GLASSES! have a higher res than many other VR headsets, their effective resolution of 256 x 240 pixels is considerably less than a typical VGA game res (320 x 200), and many games now are high-res (640 x 480).

After playing HERETIC for a few hours with the i-GLASSES!, I would look at the game on my monitor and note its markedly sharper, more colorful image. That, combined with a smaller peripheral view and the lag in head tracking detract from what would otherwise be a "must have" product. I have yet to experience motion sickness from wearing the i-GLASSES!, but a few of my testers did walk away looking slightly queesy.

While you wouldn't want to play X-COM or PANZER GENERAL with the i-GLASSES! because of the poor resolution, sim buffs should note that forthcoming games like **Domark's** TANK COMMANDER and **Looking Glass'** FLIGHT UNLIMITED will take advantage of the device's more compelling features.

One thing is clear: this is a compelling product that definitely enhances the gaming experience, and it is being supported by leading-edge game companies. Is it worth $799? If you're into simulation and action games, and you would enjoy privately viewing other entertainment like TV and movies, then I would say yes, if you can afford it. On the other hand, the relatively low resolution compared to even the lamest monitor makes me want to wait for the higher resolution version due next year.

"Future versions of the i-GLASSES! will be smaller, wireless, and support higher resolutions," says Virtual i-O president Linden Rhoads. Those improvements will help make the i-GLASSES! very compelling indeed.

Price: Video version, $599; PC version with Head Tracking, $799.
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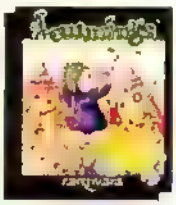


LEMMINGS
PSYGNOSIS, 1991

When initially released, LEMMINGS certainly seemed cute enough, but few could have predicted the profound impact it would have on the puzzle game genre. To save the migratory species from a self-induced demise, players frantically removed barriers, yanked the lovable Lilliputians from dangerous precipices, and rescued them from all sorts of aquatic, fiery and otherwise potentially calamitous ends, primarily by assigning lemmings to various tasks. LEMMINGS appealed to both male and female gamers, and it seemed that gamers of all ages seemed to have time for *just one more* level of this insidiously addicting game. Since the game has now migrated to every major platform, we'll probably never know how many total hours have been spent watching Lemmings shimmy up cliffs, bash through mountains, or float to safety with umbrellas. Judging from the success LEMMINGS' sequels have enjoyed, it was "non-productive time" well spent.

M-1 TANK PLATOON
MICROPROSE, 1989

One of the best from the "Golden Age" of MicroProse Simulations, this game impressed wargamers and simulation fans alike with its attention to detail and excellent combat model. For the first time, modern armored combat was recreated for the computer on a *platoon* level, rather than the single-tank view of prior sims. With the computer crunching the ballistics numbers, players were free to concentrate on giving orders—a system which worked quite well due to the excellent command control, and platoon cohesion and morale rules. The furious action captured the feel of a chaotic battlefield without feeling like an arcade game, and the enemy tanks sported a good enough AI to make worthy opponents. Despite the advances in graphics technology, the realistic terrain depiction found in M-1 TANK PLATOON has yet to be surpassed.

CIVILIZATION (MicroProse, 1991)
FALCON 3.0 (Spectrum HoloByte, 1991)
GUNSHIP (MicroProse, 1989)
HARPOON (Three-Sixty Pacific, 1989)
KING'S QUEST V (Sierra On-Line, 1990)
LEMMINGS (Psygnosis, 1991)
LINKS 386 PRO (Access Software, 1992)
M-1 TANK PLATOON (MicroProse, 1989)
RAILROAD TYCOON (MicroProse, 1990)
RED BARON (Dynamix, 1990)
THEIR FINEST HOUR (LucasArts, 1989)
THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND (LucasArts, 1990)
ULTIMA VI (Origin Systems, 1990)
ULTIMA UNDERWORLD (Origin Systems, 1992)
WING COMMANDER I & II (Origin Systems, 1990-91)
WOLFENSTEIN 3-D (id Software, 1992)

Inducted Prior to 1988

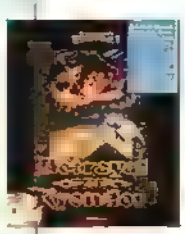
BATTLE CHESS (Interplay Productions, 1988)
CHESSMASTER (The Software Toolworks, 1986)
DUNGEON MASTER (FTL Software, 1987)
EARL WEAVER BASEBALL (Electronic Arts, 1986)
EMPIRE (Interstel, 1978)
F-19 STEALTH FIGHTER (MicroProse, 1988)
GETTYSBURG: THE TURNING POINT (SSI, 1986)
KAMPFGRUPPE (Strategic Simulations, 1985)
MECH BRIGADE (Strategic Simulations, 1985)
MIGHT & MAGIC (New World Computing, 1986)
M.U.L.E. (Electronic Arts, 1983)
PIRATES (MicroProse, 1987)
SIMCITY (Maxis, 1987)
STARFLIGHT (Electronic Arts, 1986)
THE BARD'S TALE (Electronic Arts, 1985)
ULTIMA III (Origin Systems, 1983)
ULTIMA IV (Origin Systems, 1985)
WAR IN RUSSIA (Strategic Simulations, 1984)
WASTELAND (Interplay Productions, 1986)
WIZARDRY (Sir-Tech Software, 1981)
ZORK (Infocom, 1981)

SCORE

TOP ADVENTURE GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Day of the Tentacle	LucasArts	9.87
2	Gabriel Knight	Sierra	9.42
3	Star Control II	Accolade	9.33
4	Sam & Max Hit The Road	LucasArts	9.30
5	The Seventh Guest	Virgin	9.25
6	Ecstatica	Psygnosis	9.14
7	Under A Killing Moon	Access	9.13
8	Quest for Glory I (VGA)	Sierra	9.05
9	Eric the Unready	Legend	9.04
10	Freddy Pharkas Frontier Pharmacist	Sierra	8.96

TOP ROLE PLAYING GAMES



	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Betrayal at Krondor	Dynamix	9.44
2	Ultima Underworld II	Origin	9.42
3	Might & Magic: Darkside of Xeen	New World Computing	9.37
4	Lands of Lore	Virgin	9.25
5	Might & Magic: Clouds of Xeen	New World Computing	9.11
6	Ultima VII: Part Two Serpent Isle	Origin	9.08
7	Wolf	Sanctuary Woods	8.88
8	Arena: The Elder Scrolls	Bethesda	8.81
9	Veil of Darkness	SSI	8.74
10	Menzoberranzan	SSI	8.25

TOP SIMULATION GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	NASCAR Racing	Papyrus	10.04
2	Wings of Glory	Origin	10.00
3	US Navy Fighters	Electronic Arts	9.65
4	Aces of the Deep	Dynamix	9.52
5	Indy Car Racing	Papyrus	9.43
6	World Circuit	MicroProse	9.36
7	Comanche: Maximum Overkill	NovaLogic	9.27
8	Fleet Defender	MicroProse	9.25
9	Hornet	Spectrum HoloByte	8.96
10	Aces Over Europe	Dynamix	8.66

TOP STRATEGY GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	X-COM	MicroProse	10.37
2	Master of Orion	MicroProse	10.21
3	Warlords II	SSG	9.95
4	Dune II	Virgin	9.82
5	Master of Magic	MicroProse	9.68
6	Warcraft	Blizzard	9.64
7	Sim City 2000	Maxis	9.58
8	Conquered Kingdoms	QQP	9.53
9	Incredible Machine 2	Sierra	9.25
10	Merchant Prince	QQP	9.08

READER POLL #129

TOP 100 GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	TYPE	SCORE
⇔1	Panzer General	SSI	WG	10.64
⇔2	Wing Commander 3	Origin	AC	10.48
⇔3	X-COM	MicroProse	ST	10.37
4	TIE Fighter	LucasArts	AC	10.33
5	DOOM	id Software	AC	10.24
6	Master of Orion	MicroProse	ST	10.21
⇔7	NASCAR Racing	Papyrus	SI	10.04
8	Wings of Glory	Origin	SI	10.00
9	Warlords II	SSG	ST	9.95
10	Magic Carpet	Electronic Arts	AC	9.89
⇔11	Day of the Tentacle	LucasArts	AD	9.87
12	DOOM II	id Software	AC	9.83
13	Dune II	Virgin	ST	9.82
14	Master of Magic	MicroProse	ST	9.68
15	US Navy Fighters	Electronic Arts	SI	9.65
⇔16	Front Page Sports Football Pro	Dynamix	SP	9.64
	Warcraft	Blizzard	ST	9.64
18	Heretic	id Software	AC	9.61
19	X-Wing	LucasArts	AC	9.60
20	Sim City 2000	Maxis	ST	9.58
	V for Victory: Market Garden	Three-Sixty Pacific	WG	9.58
22	Conquered Kingdoms	QQP	ST	9.53
23	V for Victory: Velikiye Luki	Three-Sixty Pacific	WG	9.52
	Aces of the Deep	Dynamix	SI	9.52
25	NHL Hockey	Electronic Arts	SP	9.49
⇔26	Betrayal at Krondor	Dynamix	RP	9.44
	War in Russia	SSI	WG	9.44
28	Indy Car Racing	Papyrus	S	9.43
29	Ultima Underworld II	Origin	RP	9.42
	Gabriel Knight	Sierra	AD	9.42
31	Front Page Sports Football 95	Sierra	SP	9.41
32	Might & Magic: Darkside of Xeen	New World Computing	RP	9.37
33	World Circuit	MicroProse	SI	9.36
34	Carriers at War Construction Kit	SSG	WG	9.35
35	Pacific War	SSI	WG	9.34
36	Star Control II	Accolade	AD AC	9.33
37	Operation Crusader	Avalon Hill	WG	9.31
38	Sam & Max Hit The Road	LucasArts	AD	9.30
	System Shock	Origin	AC	9.30
40	Comanche: Maximum Overkill	NovaLogic	S	9.27
41	Incredible Machine 2	Sierra	ST	9.25
	Lands of Lore	Virgin	RP	9.25
	The Seventh Guest	Virgin	AD	9.25
	Fleet Defender	MicroProse	SI	9.25
45	Flight Commander 2	Avalon Hill	WG	9.19
46	V for Victory: Gold Juno Sword	Three-Sixty Pacific	WG	9.18
47	Privateer	Origin	AC	9.16
48	Ecstatica	Psygnosis	AD	9.14
49	Under A Killing Moon	Access	AD	9.13
50	Might & Magic: Clouds of Xeen	New World Computing	RP	9.11

TOP WARGAMES

	NAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Panzer General	SSI	10.64
2	V for Victory: Market Garden	Three-Sixty Pacific	9.58
3	V for Victory: Velikiye Luki	Three-Sixty Pacific	9.52
4	War in Russia	SSI	9.14
5	Carriers at War Construction Kit	SSG	9.35
6	Pacific War	SSI	9.34
7	Operation Crusader	Avalon Hill	9.31
8	Flight Commander 2	Avalon Hill	9.19
9	V for Victory: Gold Juno Sword	Three-Sixty Pacific	9.18
10	Tanks	SSI	9.00

TOP ACTION GAMES

	NAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Wing Commander 3	Origin	10.48
2	TIE Fighter	LucasArts	10.33
3	DOOM	id Software	10.24
4	Magic Carpet	Electronic Arts	9.89
5	DOOM II	id Software	9.83
6	Heretic	id Software	9.61
7	X-Wing	LucasArts	9.60
8	System Shock	Origin	9.30
9	Privateer	Origin	9.16
10	Descent	Interplay	9.06

TOP SPORTS GAMES

	NAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Front Page Sports Football Pro	Dynamix	9.64
2	NHL Hockey	Electronic Arts	9.49
3	Front Page Sports Football 95	Sierra	9.41
4	PGA Tour Golf 486	Electronic Arts	8.95
5	Front Page Sports Baseball	Sierra	8.93
6	Tony La Russa Baseball II	SSI	8.78
7	Hardball IV	Accolade	7.94
8	Jordan In Flight	Electronic Arts	7.85
9	Microsoft Golf 2.0	Microsoft	7.43
10	Ultimate Football	MicroProse	7.26

Vote!

You've read our take on the latest games, now here's a chance to see what your fellow gamers think. The *CGW* Top 100 is a monthly tally of game ratings provided by our readers via the *CGW* Poll ballot found in each issue. Approximately 50 games are rated each month, and the results are added to the aggregate results from past months. This historical database serves as a terrific reference for what you, the gamers, feel are the best plays in gaming.

51	The Grandest Fleet	QQP	ST	9.08
	Merchant Prince	QQP	ST	9.08
	Ultima VII: Part Two Serpent Isle	Origin	RP	9.08
54	Syndicate	Electronic Arts	ST,AC	9.07
55	Descent	Interplay	AC	9.05
56	Quest for Glory I (VGA)	Sierra	AD,RP	9.05
57	Eric the Unready	Legend	AD	9.04
58	Battles of Destiny	QQP	ST	9.00
	Tanks	SSI	WG	9.00
	VGA Planets	Tim Wisseman	ST	9.00
61	Clash of Steel	SSI	WG	8.98
62	Tigers on the Prowl	HPS Simulations	WG	8.97
63	Harpoon	Spectrum HoloByte	SI	8.96
	Freddy Pharkas Frontier Pharmacist	Sierra	AD	8.96
65	Alone in the Dark	I-Motion	AD	8.95
	PGA Tour Golf 486	Electronic Arts	SP	8.95
	Relentless	Electronic Arts	AD	8.95
68	Legend of Kyrandia 3	Virgin	AD	8.94
69	Front Page Sports Baseball	Sierra	SP	8.93
70	The Incredible Machine	Dynamix	ST	8.92
71	Wolf	Sanctuary Woods	RP	8.88
72	Incredible Toons	Dynamix	ST	8.86
73	Transport Tycoon	MicroProse	ST	8.84
74	Rise of the Triad	Apogee	AC	8.8
75	Empire Deluxe	New World Computing	ST	8.82
	Carriers at War II	SSG	WG	8.82
77	Arena: The Elder Scrolls	Bethesda	RP	8.81
78	Sierra City	SSI	ST	8.80
79	Harpoon II	Three-Sixty Pacific	WG	8.78
	Tony LaRussa Baseball II	SSI	SP	8.78
81	Myst	Broderbund	AD	8.77
82	King's Quest VII	Sierra	AD	8.75
83	Genghis Khan II	Koei	WG	8.74
	Veil of Darkness	SSI	RP	8.74
	Dracula Unleashed	Viacom	AD	8.74
86	Aces Over Europe	Dynamix	S	8.66
87	F-15 Strike Eagle III	MicroProse	S	8.65
88	MiG-29	Spectrum HoloByte	S	8.64
89	Superheroes of Hoboken	Legend	AD	8.61
90	Space Quest V: Mutation	Sierra	AD	8.60
91	Hand Of Fate	Westwood Studios	AD	8.56
92	Kasparov's Gambit	Electronic Arts	ST	8.54
	Lords of the Realm	Impressions	ST	8.54
94	Rules of Engagement 2	Impressions	ST	8.52
95	The Horde	Crystal Dynamics	AC,ST	8.50
96	Star Trek: Judgment Rites	Interplay	AD	8.49
	Prince of Persia 2	Broderbund	AC	8.49
98	The Lost Vikings	Interplay	AC	8.46
99	Sid n' Al s Incredible Toons	Dynamix	ST	8.45
	Death Gate	Legend	AD	8.45

Games on unnumbered lines have scores equal to the line above. ✱ = Top game of type. Dark Teal = New Game
AD = Adventure, RP = Role Playing, SI = Simulation, ST = Strategy, WG = Wargame, AC = Action, SP = Sports

The Computer Gaming World Poll

A MONTHLY SURVEY OF THE READERS OF COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

PATCHES

Computer game programs have grown so massive and the number of hardware configurations has become so huge that incompatibilities and glitches are frustratingly common. Software fixes, or "patches," for buggy programs have become a necessary evil until we reach the golden age of standardized platforms and bug-free programs.

These patches can usually be downloaded from the major online networks (CompuServe, GEnie, ZiffNet), but can also be obtained from individual software publisher's own BBSs or direct from the publisher with proof of purchase. Red indicates new files.

1942: Pacific Air War Gold CD-ROM Update: Contains a new version of the file 1942CD.COM, which will correct a problem seen if your copy of the game has a volume label of PAW_1942 instead of 1942_PAW, where the game will not run from a minimum installation. 3/16/95

Alien Logic V1.02 Update: Corrects the Cleash General *Null Jig Tokens* Crash, as well as adding command line switches for many sound boards. 3/10/95

Colonization Version 3.0: Corrects reported problems and adds a map editor. Works *only* with the U.S. version of the game. 2/13/95

Descent V1.2 Update: Includes several bug fixes and adds support for multiple sockets during netgames, hooks for Spaceball controller support and alternate joystick reading methods. 3/24/95

Doom V1.9: Official id upgrade works *only* with version 1.666. 2/8/95

5th Fleet Version 1.2 Update: Fixes some reported bugs. 2/2/95

Flash Traffic Installation Update: New INSTALL.EXE expands sound card support, includes drivers for MS Sound System and cards with the Ensoniq chip. 1/27/95

FrontLines V1.01: Fixes reported bugs. 2/10/95

Front Page Sports: Baseball '94 V1.02: Fixes many reported problems, including crash bugs and General Manager AI, as well as roster handling bugs. 2/3/95

Front Page Sports: Football Pro '95 V1.02: Adds fans to the stands and enables the CD-ROM version of the game to access extra plays from the CD, plus many other enhancements. 1/26/95

Hammer of the Gods Update: Fixes mouse problems, low memory issues and all known related issues. 2/22/95

Harpoon 2 Upgrade: Fixes some reported problems. 3/14/95

Harpoon Classic Macintosh V1.57: Fixes some missile targetting bugs; works with version 1.5 or better. 2/3/95

Harpoon Classic for Windows V1.53b: Corrects several reported GPF errors, and fully implements all version 1.32 missile changes including bearing-only attacks; works with version 1.5 or better. 2/2/95

Hell PG-13 Version Update: To be used *only* for the PG-13 version of Hell: Certain words are "beeped" out. 3/22/95

Links: The Challenge of Golf Update: Fixes lockups with Sound Blaster 16 cards. 3/22/95

Master of Magic V1.31 Update: Latest upgrade to MicroProse strategy/magic game with numerous fixes, new features, and major AI enhancements. Updates all versions. 3/07/95

Out of this World Macintosh V1.0.3: Bypasses code wheel protection, fixes incompatiblities with System 7.5, and takes care of the white screen problem with the PowerPC. 2/17/95

Panzer General V1.1 Update: Separate CD-ROM and floppy patches fix some reported problems. 1/6/95

Return to Zork V1.2: Fixes many bugs and inconsistencies in gameplay, and fixes many audio driver problems. 2/17/95.

SimTower V1.1 Update: Macintosh-only patch fixes problems with metro station, random lock ups and some graphics glitches. 1/20/95

Tanks V1.25: *Unofficial* patch by Norm Koger adds panic fire and retreats, hidden AT guns, variable weather, horse-drawn artillery, reduced effectiveness air and artillery and much more. 1/25/95

Ultima 8 V2.12: Comprehensive patch includes fixes to many problems as well as several game enhancements. 2/17/95

Warcraft: Orcs and Humans Disk/CD-ROM Update: Works with both the disk and CD-ROM versions; contains unit editor and cheat codes. 1/27/95

Warcraft V1.21 Upgrade: Offers improved sound card support, increased 2-player game speed and many more fixes. 3/20/95

Wing Commander III QVision Patch: This patch will fix problems with the Compaq QVision in SVGA mode. 2/17/95

Publisher BBS Numbers

Many of these patches are available directly from the publishers' bulletin board systems. Call with your modem parity settings at N-8-1.

Accolade (408) 296-8800

Activision (310) 479-1335

Apogee (508) 368-7036

Bethesda (301) 990-7552

Broderbund (415) 883-5889

Capstone (305) 374-6872

Creative Labs (405) 742-6660

Id Software (508) 368-4137

Impressions (617) 225-2042.

InterPlay (714) 252-2822

LucasArts (415) 257-3070

Maxis (510) 254-3869

MicroProse (410) 785-1841

Microsoft (206) 936-6735

NovaLogic (818) 774-9528

Origin (512) 328-8402

Papyrus (617) 576-7472

Sierra Online (209) 683-4463

Spectrum HoloByte (510) 522-8909

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"What's the Deal with...Me?"

by Martin E. Cirulis

Well, folks, it's true.... The Rumor Guy has left the building. And in whatever incarnation he graces these pages, or if he chooses to only haunt suburban shopping malls to be spotted by lonely people with lifetime subscriptions to The Inquirer, I'm sure we all wish him well.

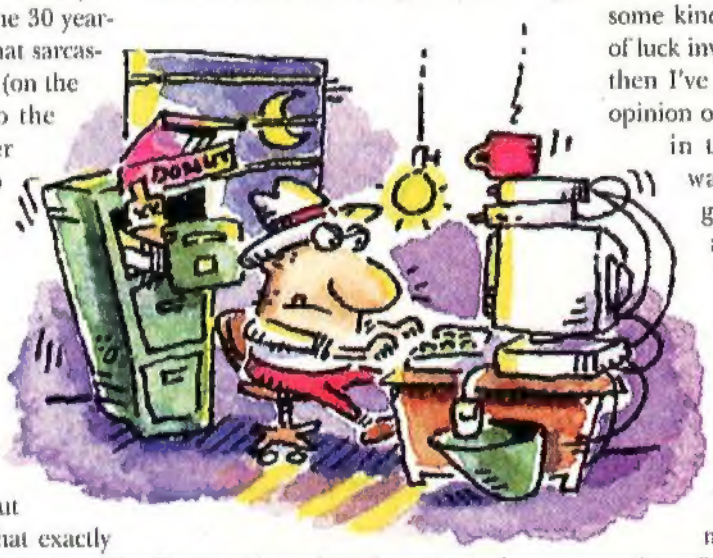
And in his place, dear readers, you get me, Martin E. Cirulis. One 30 year-old, slightly grumpy, somewhat sarcastic, mostly harmless, triple-A (on the verge of being called up to the pros) Science Fiction writer and software reviewer who will hold forth once a month on whatever trend, good as well as bad, in the entertainment software industry catches my eye or puts a burr in my pants.

Those of you familiar with my reviews will already have a pretty good idea of my take on things, but others may be wondering what exactly qualifies me to fill up this final page of *CGW* with little black marks. At the risk of padding my ego, let's go over my qualifications, such as they are.

First of all, I'm a Writer, which makes it a little easier for you to understand me and certainly makes the Editor's job a little easier. I've been writing SF for a few years now, and my newest novella, *Stiletto*, will appear in an upcoming *AMAZING Stories* anthology. I am currently collaborating with Lucius Shepard, Hugo, Nebula and World Fantasy award winner, on his new SF novel as well as working on my own near-future novel.

"Fair enough," you say, "but an SF writer doing a column in a computer magazine is hardly original, and besides, what the heck do you know about things that count, like computer games?"

Well, being an old-timer, my computer experience goes all the way back to the very late 70s—bugging my parents to blow $1600 (Canadian) on the original Apple, so I could write 50 lines of code that would draw little square horsies on the screen. Sadly, they didn't go for it and my lust for personal computers continues to this day. A more serious close encounter with bits n' bytes occurred in the early 80s, when I spent three years at the University of British Columbia hoping to someday pursue a higher calling in the world of Artificial Intelligence research and applications. Fortunately for my social life, I suffered a financial and philosophical crisis (most students without rich parents, or brains the size of planets, able to pull down every scholarhip in the universe, can probably imagine the first half of the crisis; the second revolved around how wise it was to spend a lot of money learning how to model a thing like the human mind, when nobody really knows how it works), and turned to the world of writing instead. While my coding skills are sadly out of date, I retain my general knowledge and my undying sympathy for those forced to write in Assembly.



And during all these years of twisted development I must confess my most wholesome hobby has been gaming, from board, to pen-n'-paper to computers to actual physical effort. If there is some kind of skill required, some kind of luck involved and it's possible to lose, then I've played it or at least have an opinion on it. My first board game: lost in the mists of time. My first wargame: Losing 50 straight games of AFRIKA KORP at the age of eight. My first RPG: TRAVELER, with the original three little books. My first computerized games: PONG, SPACE INVADERS, and some weird MISSILE COMMAND clone loaded from tape on a color TRS-80. From then on I've been spending far too much time goofing off on a string of personal computers from the C-64 to the Atari ST and finally the 486/66.

So there you go. That's a bit of who I am and why I get to do this; hopefully it will be enough to keep you reading through the uncharted wilds of the last page. It's been nice meeting you all. Try to be here next month, when the fun really starts.

Meanwhile, if there's something going on in the industry you think Martin should be praising/butchering, let him know by sending a note to: "What's the deal with..." c/o CGW, 135 Main St. 14th Floor, San Francisco, CA 94105.

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